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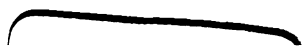
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**IN LOVE AND IN HATE.**

**VOL. III.**



# IN LOVE AND IN HATE.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1875.

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# IN LOVE AND IN HATE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GREAT SORTIE.

THE memory of the events at Le Bourget lay sadly upon our two friends. It was a point lost in the war, and the disaster was intensified by the presence of a personal sorrow. Mandeman had strangely fascinated the two young men. His gaiety attracted them, they admired his careless gallantry, and they appreciated with gratitude the frankness with which he seemed to forget the differences of their social position.

‘I’ll tell you what, Michel,’ said Mike Mahony, ‘if we don’t have a good big fight soon, I’ll make a fool of myself and take to crying.’

‘He deserves tears, for he was a noble soul. But I agree with you that action of some sort is needed to get rid of this miserable depression.’

‘What is that, Michel?’ said Mike quickly. ‘Have you the glass?’

Michel, who had been definitely presented by

Lieutenant Brantome with his lorgnette, and carried it with him whenever possible, raised it now to his eyes and directed his attention whither Mike suggested. The afternoon was calm and the sky clear, flecked only with a few light spots that floated here and there. To the naked eye the object at which he looked was only like a large bird, but the glass immediately revealed its nature more accurately. 'It is a balloon,' he said. 'Ha, I thought so,' was the response. Under the light breeze the balloon was going steadily along in a direction due east from the city, when in its ascending flight it seemed to enter another stratum of air, and quickly, almost suddenly, its course appeared to change to the north, and become more rapid. Michel watched it intently until it disappeared from his gaze, still speeding along a northerly course.

'I wonder,' he said thoughtfully, 'have they watched that balloon from the Ministry of War.'

'I suppose they are busier than us,' said Mike, who was leisurely seated on the esplanade in front of Fort Nogent, 'and, may be, think they have something less funny to look after than that kind of kite flying.'

Michel shook his head. 'These balloons are our only chance of communicating with the great army that there is down, they say, on the Loire, and that one certainly does not seem like to do its mission very effectually.'

‘It’s a curious kind of travelling post-office. I wonder have they to put weights on the letters to keep them from being blown sky-high?’

Michel still continued thoughtful. ‘It seems a pity,’ he observed, ‘that its intelligence should be travelling away from the quarter where it may be useful.’

And he was right. The puff of wind which changed the direction of this aerial traveller was one of the causes which combined to render unavailing the desperate struggle that France now waged. It was on the 24th it rose into the air. With ordinary good fortune it might have been expected to descend within the next forty-eight hours in some part of France whence its news could be communicated to the delegate of the Government at Tours. How important it was that this should occur may be understood from the chief message it contained. It was from General Trochu to M. Gambetta, and it said, ‘The news received from the Loire army has decided me to go out on the southern side, and to march towards that army at any cost. On Monday, 28th November, my preparations will be finished. I am carrying them on day and night. On Tuesday, the 29th, an army commanded by General Ducrot, the most energetic of us all, will attack the enemy’s positions, and, if they are carried, will push onward towards the Loire in the direction of the Gien.’ This momentous message

was, however, carried merrily away over the English Channel, over England itself, across the German Ocean, and the balloon landed in Norway. It was the 30th when its contents were received at Tours, and by that time the fate of the sortie had been all but decided, and the co-operating movement which it was hoped would ensure its success had become impossible.

The afternoon on which our friends were engaged in watching the balloon was the last on which they had any reason to complain of dulness. No doubt it was rather hard on them to find all exit beyond the fortifications stopped by proclamation, but then there were other things to occupy the mind. From the city came rumours of proclamations one after another, and of other evidences, all betokening preparation for some great event, which was finally announced to them by the celebrated address of Ducrot. Yet again, on the night of the 28th, came some valid testimonies of hot work impending. All behind Fort Nogent came the incessant thunder of guns, which roared from the southern and western forts, and was echoed by gun-boats that had got up the Seine as far as Pont à l'Anglais. These sounds of supposed conflict created no small excitement in Nogent, where the garrison was still comparatively small, though augmented by contingents of troops of all arms that were prepared for the grand movement that had been announced to commence on

the morrow. The morrow rose sullen and dark. Michel and Mike found themselves on their old campaigning ground, but this time not alone nor even accompanied by a few, but as part of a large army, the forlorn hope of the intended assault upon the German lines. But the ardour of the troops was damped, and the plan of the generals interfered with, by an unexpected obstacle. The Marne was before them, but not in the condition in which our friends had been accustomed to observe it. Instead of its slow and sullen tide there was a fierce, angry flood. For two months, owing to fear of the Germans, the sluices had been neglected, and recent rains had swollen the river until it had overpassed its boundaries, and rolled over its bed in a yellow, turbid stream. An attempt was made with a pontoon to bridge the threatening current, but it was carried away, and those engaged had a narrow escape of being borne down in the seething waters. An order came to retire ; the co-operating attack on the other side of the city was withdrawn, and for the time the attempt was abandoned.

At the reveillée next morning Mike remarked to his companion that it was a fine morning, glory be to God, and that there was no more water in the fields than one would expect to see on a dry day in Ireland. The flood, indeed, had much subsided, and the pontoons were at last available. Mike and Michel were amongst the first to cross.



As they looked back to the fort after crossing the river they saw the plain in the bend of the stream swarming with men and horses, after debouching from the same gate as themselves.

‘I’m thinking,’ said Mike, ‘it isn’t our usual fault we’re going to have, of too few, but too many. Those troops below there are hindering one another just for all the world like a dozen fellows hitting at one in a fair.’

The signal to charge left no further time for philosophizing. The German troops in front were not numerous as usual, but they were still strong, being eighteen thousand in number. They were at the crest of a gentle slope which gave them a fearful advantage. On the other hand the guns of the fort, with a cross fire from Mount Avron, seriously annoyed the German line. At first there were only outposts on the German side, which were easily driven in, but by-and-by the numbers of the latter grew denser, and they were able to make a better front to those engaged in the sortie. And now the affair began gradually to reach the proportions of a battle, which extended over a line of four miles. The fire became fast and furious. The Germans, accustomed to victory, and having the superiority of position, maintained themselves with steadiness for a considerable period, but were insensibly losing ground.

‘Colonel,’ said an old white-haired General to an officer near him, ‘that village of Brie

appears to be occupied by a large number of the enemy.'

'It has been always a strong post of theirs.'

'It enables them to pour a galling fire in upon us here. We must have it.'

'Good, General. Shall I lead the attack myself?'

'Do so. Take sufficient force with you.'

The bugles rang out.

'My lads,' said the Colonel in a clear, piercing voice, 'we are going to take Brie. En avant!'

A shout was the answer, and a rush. As they were moving along at the pas de charge, Mike turned to his companion who was not far from him, 'Do you remember the night we made a slaughter-house of this place?'

'I do.'

'I wonder have they removed all the horses yet?'

'Why do you ask?'

'I hardly know. A queer idea crossed my mind. I'd like to put a lot of Prussians on their horses.'

'But what would be the use of putting live men on dead horses?'

'But I don't mean they should be alive.'

'Oh!'

As they approached the village a murderous fire assailed the French, but they pressed on steadily. The houses were crenellated, and from within the

walls came musket balls; the streets were barricaded, and the pavement torn up. At the further end were a couple of pieces of light artillery, which were well handled, and created no small amount of destruction in the ranks of the assailants. But nothing could withstand their onset. Its impetuosity bore them steadily into the village, over their own dead and wounded, then over those of the enemy. They swarmed across the barricade, and captured those of its defenders who had not fled. From the backs of the houses the Germans might be seen flying to escape. The cannon had been carried off when it was seen by the manner in which the French had cleared the first barricade, that their assault was not to be resisted. Some few prisoners were caught in the houses. Michel and Mike had entered one, but were attracted by a sort of smothered sound, as of one suffocated. They went into the kitchen, where they found jammed in the doorway a Prussian soldier who, in the attempt to emulate the flight of his lighter comrades, had got absolutely wedged.

Michel laughed. 'How are we to get him out?'

'Leave it to me,' said Mike, retreating a few steps. Then with a bound, as if he were driven out of a catapult, he shot himself against the back of the stout German. The bulky soldier disappeared through the door, Mike rolling over and

over him. As the latter gathered himself up he surveyed the countenance of the captive, and exclaimed, 'Why, it's an old acquaintance.'

'Who?' asked Michel.

'The fattest of the sergeants.'

## CHAPTER II.

## THE GREAT SORTIE.

‘**T**HAT’S well done, I think,’ remarked Mike Mahony to his companion as, leaning on his smoking rifle, he looked around, on the 1st of December, one of the captors of the village of Petit-Brie.

‘It is as well done as Le Bourget,’ answered Michel, ‘and I am not sure but that it will have the same end.’

‘How so?’

‘We have already an armistice to bury the dead.’

‘Oh, surely that’s right. I’ve no objection myself to killing a Prussian, but I’m not such a Turk as to deny him the pleasure of being buried, though, of course, we couldn’t let him have much of a wake.’

‘It is right and desirable to bury the dead, but is it only for that purpose the Prussians will use the time, think you?’

‘Ha, they will be sending up re-inforcements, you fancy?’

‘They were puzzled by sorties from different

sides of the city, but now that they have ascertained where our serious attack is they will mass up enormous forces here. Come, let us to our work.'

The two men went towards the wall of the park of Villiers. During the preceding day it had been the scene of repeated struggles between the Germans and French, and had been taken and retaken more than once. At dusk it was in possession of the Germans, but throughout the night it was so battered by the guns of the fort that it became perfectly useless as a means of defence. It is but a few steps from the western end of the village to the park wall, but these steps were through scenes calculated to startle an unaccustomed eye. In the street and on the roadway lay the bodies of Saxons and French side by side. In parts they lay so thick that it was almost impossible to step without treading on a human form. The houses had been riddled with shells, and even now, that the firing was long ceased, there would come at times an avalanche of tiles from some broken roof threatening serious injury to the living, and inflicting needless wounds on the dead. The wall of the park showed huge gaps, and here and there from out recumbent masses of masonry the bodies of men crushed to death might be seen. At either side of it the ground was torn up by the striking of the shells. Within, one huge tree had a great branch trailing on the ground; another was ac-

tually smoking still from the flame which the shell had kindled in its boughs. The work of separating the dead from the living was a sad task, and it was a question whether the former were not the more to be pitied of the two. Wounds assumed their most ghastly shape; exposure and thirst had added tortures that in many cases surpassed those caused by the deadly hurts. There was a deep hole in some degree sheltered from the fire that levelled the wall. Our companions looked into it. In the centre lay a dead charger and across him the body of his rider, a Saxon general. Around were fifteen wounded French and Germans who had crept into this miserable resting-place during the night. At the edge, leaning over, was a Prussian artilleryman. He had a flask in his hand, and was giving drink to the wretches within.

‘Why, Michel, look there,’ said Mike.

‘At what?’

‘Don’t you see that fellow? Look, he is giving a drink to our men as well as to his own.’

‘You are right, Mike. I hate these Prussians for the wrongs they have done me and my country. But, no doubt, war makes them fierce, and the real nature of the men may be good enough.’

‘Well, may I never sin if I’d feel comfortable about putting a bullet into a fellow that shows such a heart of a Christian.’

‘We cannot help it, Mike. Wars aren’t made

by you nor me. We are not consulted about them, we are only told to fight.'

A little further on they came to where a Prussian party were engaged in digging a trench, whose purpose was made easily manifest by the confused mass of bodies that lay by its edge. They had just completed their task, and commenced to lay their dead comrades in their appointed resting-place. The first taken up was that of an artilleryman. Some of the members of his corps, who were engaged in the performance of the last hasty offices, laid beneath his head an unexploded shell. Michel asked the German the meaning of the proceeding. The soldier who had put in the shell shrugged his shoulders. It was the custom, he said. Very likely when they had time to give their comrades fitting burial the corps would know by this mark that the buried man was one of them.

'It's a lucky thing for him he's dead,' remarked Mike. 'If he were alive he could never rest easy on a pillow like that. He'd be killed for want of sleep.'

By a mound of dead at which our companions came to assist there stood a German officer, Saxon by his uniform. He was a strongly-built man of fifty, with iron-grey hair and moustache showing signs of white. They guessed his rank to be that of a major. He was by himself, the bulk of the ambulance parties being engaged in different parts



of the field, and they saw him stoop as if endeavouring to separate some of the bodies.

‘Can I assist you, mein Herr?’ said Michel, in German, respectfully touching his kepi.

‘No, no, thank you,’ said the officer hastily, ‘there is no occasion. You have given us some work here,’ said he, with an almost jaunty air, as he pointed to the pile of bodies which now lay tumbled together in the fraternity of death.

Michel looked at him attentively. It struck him that under the apparent levity of the stranger’s manner there was some anxiety.

‘The Herr officer is looking for some one? If so, my comrade and I will be glad to help.’

‘No——well, yes. Do, good fellows, remove some of these poor creatures. I would like just to make quite sure that a——a person is not here.’

Michel and Mike immediately set to work, the Saxon major looking on the while with a countenance curiously set. They lifted off first a huge Prussian guard, then a mobile, then a chasseur of the line, then two bodies of Saxon soldiers. As the last body was raised there was revealed a boyish face below, fair and round, with yellow hair and a budding moustache. The blue eyes stared straight up into the sky, the helmet was torn off, and the fair hair was deeply dyed with blood. An officer’s uniform clothed the body: it seemed quite new and gay, but it was smeared

with soil and torn in many parts by the incidents of the fight. The men engaged in the search, soldiers as they were, felt a movement of pity as they looked into the face of the poor dead lad, and their attention was for a few seconds rivetted upon his face. A deep groan, and the exclamation 'Oh, God, have mercy on my poor Elise !' caused them to look up. The countenance of the officer was writhing in agony, but in a moment it was almost calm again, 'Soldiers,' he said, 'you have found for me what I wanted, and, ach ! what I did not want to see.'

'It is some relative of Herr officer ?'

'It is my son, my only son.'

'Ah, that is sad.'

'Yes, sad for him, poor boy, sad for me ; but for his mother—oh, Heavens !——' Here his voice was interrupted by something that sounded like a sob, but once again he mastered his emotion. 'My good men,' said he, 'help me to carry him out of this ghastly heap.'

They aided the officer to raise the sad burden, and bear it to a portion of the field less encumbered with dead.

'Thanks, friends,' he said with dignity, as they softly laid down the fair young head, 'I am grateful for your help. My own men will soon be here, and I shall not trouble you further.'

The men saluted him and they parted. They could not forbear a last look as they moved away.

He stooped once to kiss the lips of his son ; then, standing erect, but with both hands leaning lightly on his sword, he stood by the head of the corpse, waiting and watching. For the few minutes they were able to hold him in sight he had not changed this attitude.

‘ Michel,’ said Mike after a long reverie.

‘ Well.’

‘ What do you think of faction fighting ?’

‘ Think of it ! I know nothing about it. What is it ?’

‘ You see, the neighbours go to a fair, or a burying, or a wake, or some other place of amusement, and they naturally take a sup, and when they do there rises up some little point of difference, such as the length of a man’s nose, or the height of a donkey’s ears, or the number of crosses in a yard of check, and then the words come to blows, and they beat each other for generations, maybe.’

‘ They do ?’

‘ Ay, do they. Queer, isn’t it ?’

‘ Very extraordinary, indeed.’

‘ So I say—bad, too, isn’t it ?’

‘ I think so.’

‘ So do I. The newspapers write at it, the priest denounces it, the peelers are always against it.’

‘ So they ought to be.’

‘ Surely, surely, that’s what I say. But, you see——’

‘But what?’

‘Well, you know, it is very bad, no doubt——’

‘It is, indeed.’

‘But, after all, is it so much more ridiculous than what we are at now? Had that handsome Saxon boy much better reason to come and try to kill us, or the sailor who fired the shell from the fort that killed him, much more notion of the why or because than the people at Cappagh that have a fling at each other’s skull now and then?’

‘Perhaps——’

‘And then you see it isn’t often you’d find after a faction fight such a mighty big funeral as there’s going on in that field over there.’

## CHAPTER III.

## MADE CAPTIVE.

‘**W**HAT is that?’ said Michel, starting up from the bivouac fire, where he was preparing some coffee.

‘It’s uncommonly like an old trick,’ responded Mike. ‘We capture a village and then the enemy come and surprise us.’

The cry resounded down the street ‘aux armes!’ Then the trumpets began to sound and the drums to beat, men were seen rushing wildly in all directions, sergeants entreating soldiers to fall into rank, and officers giving vainly commands that were hardly heard or understood. The regiment of our friends held the place, but the guard was careless, and there were not a hundred men on the alert when it was found the village was turned. There was a short struggle in which the advantage was all on the side of the assailants. The outposts were driven in, and with a tremendous rush the Saxons came on, the French for the most part retreating before them. But even thus it was not without a sharp struggle, and bayonets were actually crossed.

'You are wounded?' said Mike, breathless, to his comrade, as they drew up a handful on the height which leads from Brie to Villiers.

'A scratch.'

'It is from a bayonet?'

'Yes, a Saxon took me on the arm.'

'And he?'

'Oh, I cannot say exactly. My bayonet struck fairer, and went deeper than his.'

They were not more than a dozen in all. Beside Mike and Michel there were one or two of the old band of franc-tireurs, and they were all resolute men. But their position was a serious one, for they were at the German end of the village, and the forces of the enemy were actually between them and the main body of the French army.

'Now, my lads,' said Michel, 'you see where we are. There are Prussians in the Park here to the left; there are Prussians to the right in the field and orchards over there; the Saxons are in the village before us, and the Prussian army is behind us. You are in fact prisoners if you like to give up. What do you say?'

'What do you say?'

'Oh, I, that is nothing. My resolution is taken long since.'

'And what is that?'

'That I shall not fall alive into the hands of the enemy.'

‘Good. We have taken the same resolution.’

‘Be it so. Then every man conceal himself as well as he can, scattering a little. Very likely before long we may be able to do some effective service, handful only though we be.’

They crouched behind the vines or crept into the furrows, lying concealed thus from an enemy whose posts were often within a few feet of them. They could even hear the voices of the German soldiers, who seemed in high glee at the success they had just accomplished. The position, however, became tedious. Away down towards the other side of Villiers, the roar of battle could be heard dull and continuous, but no sound in front of the anxious watchers came to indicate that they would soon be relieved from their crippling posture.

‘I would almost as soon be made a prisoner,’ impatiently said a young mobile who by chance had become one of the party.

‘Patience, comrade,’ said Michel. ‘Our friends will never let the village remain in the hands of the enemy.’

As he spoke a whistle was heard in the air and with a loud thud a shell buried itself in the ground in front of them. The fragments flew wild and wide, but the shelter such as it was saved the little party.

‘Ha, what did I tell you?’ said Michel, ‘this means that the ball is going to recommence.’

'It seems,' remarked Mike coolly, 'they prefer blowing us to bits with our own shell to losing us as prisoners. It's a compliment.'

'They will get the range better, I expect, soon.'

Michel was right. In another moment a shot dropped right into the village, and then, as if that was all that was needed, a furious storm of shell followed. The streets were blazing with the burning fragments as they exploded, the houses were being smashed in all directions, and the air was filled with smoke and the dust of tumbled buildings. The enemy was brave enough, but a restless disposition began to be exhibited.

'Our time is come,' said Michel, as, laying his rifle to his cheek, he fired into the nearest rank of the Saxons, which was about two hundred yards distant. His companions did the same, and every shot told.

Meanwhile the sounds of conflict came up now from the right as well as the left and front. The enemy had obtained a temporary success by turning the village, but the French had resumed the offensive, and a heavy attack was the consequence. On the bank of the Marne a battery had been established both of cannon and of mitrailleuses, and it was served with great vigour and effect. From their partial concealment our party could see the terrible gaps made in the ranks of the enemy as the hail of balls from the latter instrument swept through them, and they could not help a feeling



of exultation as they saw reversed, almost for the first time, if even for the moment, the conditions of the combat. But the affair had its disagreeable side. The French artillery was well served, but it did not make distinctions. The very first shell fired down the length of the village had, as we have already observed, gone nearly into the centre of the little French party. More than one other had struck and levelled the low wall which formed part of their defence, and though they were to some extent concealed by vines and apple trees, these afforded but little protection against the balls of the mitraille or the fragments of shells. And the former made itself heard with unpleasant frequency. How the balls whistled, rattled, tore through the branches, as the discharges, becoming more thick and frequent, decimated the ranks of the enemy.

‘I say Michel,’ said Mike, we have a saying in Ireland, “Save me from my friends.” I think after escaping the Germans we are likely to get spoiled by the French.’

‘It cannot be helped. Let us blaze away.’

‘All right — One down. I’ll tell you what, Michel,’ as a bouquet of bullets from the mitrailleuse spread themselves around them, ‘it’s just like the meanness of them Germans to be letting messages go past that were intended for themselves. I’d lay a wager if they were letters with post office orders in them they’d stop them fast enough.’

The balls came even faster than Mike's tongue. A groan at his side told that one of them had found a billet not intended.

'Who is that?' asked Michel hastily.

'Barbet,' moaned a faint voice.

'Poor fellow! Are you badly hurt?'

'Once and for all.'

Again one was taken from the small company.

'Besançon,' said Mike, 'are you hurt?'

There was no answer. The silence told enough. A few minutes had passed and a mobile fell. Mike leaned over him. 'Wounded, Moblot?'

The poor fellow answered only by a convulsive shiver which seemed to shake his whole frame. Then he lay stretched out rigid, a slight tremulous movement of the eyelid alone giving a faint indication of life.

'Michel, how are you off for ammunition?'

'I have but two cartridges left. Perhaps some of our fallen men may have a few unexhausted?'

'I'll try. It isn't robbing them anyhow. One, two, three—that's all.'

'We must make the most of them.'

Still the rain of balls fell amongst them, and once again death claimed his contribution from the little French rank as well as from the great German force gathered around the village.

'Hurrah, they are giving way,' cried Mike, as the Saxons seemed to show uncertainty under the terrible fire which assailed them both within and

without the village. 'Isn't it a murder? My last cartridge is gone.'

'There is one for you, Irlandais, in my pouch,' cried a soldier, as a ball struck him fatally.

'By Heavens, you are a brave soldier, old Roger,' said Mike, as he stooped over the fallen man.

'How many are we, Mike?' asked Michel, the men being half concealed from each other by the thick leaves.

'I think we are but three. Are you holding on, Roubaix?'

There was no reply.

'Alas,' said Michel. 'It seems we are but two.'

'Not even that; you are alone Michel,' said Mike, as staggering to catch a branch of a low tree, he missed it, and fell heavily to the ground.

His comrade stooped hastily over him. 'Heavens! Mike, are you, too, struck down? Good God, he is dead!' exclaimed Michel as he saw Mike's eyes close.

In a moment, however, he opened them again, and with a faint voice he said, 'No, Michel, no, I'm alive,' and then he added as the ghost of a smile passed over his face, 'but I'm not kicking, because—because, you see, my leg is broke.'

'My poor friend, this is the hardest of all. Let me try to get you into some shelter from this terrible mitraille of our friends. Alas, I have not a drop of wine or anything to give you.'

‘Never mind, Michel, I think I’ve got—my tea—without sweetening this time.’

‘What is that? Let me raise you a little, you will be less incommoded.’ He bent over the form of his friend, and endeavoured to improve his position. As he raised his head he could not suppress an exclamation. Around him were twenty German soldiers. Driven back in all directions by the fire of the mitrailleuse they were abandoning the village, fighting still. A portion of them had made their way to the corner where our friends were posted. In his pre-occupation with his fallen comrade Michel had failed to observe them, and now he was in their hands. He was in despair. He looked for his rifle, but it lay some paces distant where he had put it down to help Mike. Rough hands were on his shoulders, and he was weaponless and helpless.

He leaned over his friend. ‘Adieu, dear comrade, I would to Heaven that I were lying alongside of you, wounded—or dead as poor Barbet there.’


‘Don’t fret, Michel, because you have no chance of a broken leg. I’m, may be, not so bad after all. Perhaps, I’ll be able to hop after you and—and—’ Here a ghastly paleness overspread his face, and as Michel turned a last glance over the shoulders of his captors he saw that his friend lay motionless and insensible on the sward.

## CHAPTER IV.

## WOUNDED.

DURING the excitement of such a battle as raged around Brie and Villiers, but little heed was taken by those engaged of the state of the atmosphere; but inaction soon made it felt. The early morning was bright and cold, and the air was clear. It had that kind of crispness which seems to lend new animation to the blood while we are making exertion. But before the day had passed its noon a cold searching wind sprang up, and gradually the temperature descended till the hoary rime settled down upon every prominent object, and the ground grew as hard as if it were plated with iron.

A considerable time had passed since poor Mike Mahony witnessed the departure of his friend. A swoon had for the time dulled his senses to the pain of his wound, and to the grief he felt at the captivity which had befallen Michel. He lay at the foot of the tree to which his affectionate comrade had borne him, as unconscious of the battle which still raged in the direction of Villiers and



Champigny as he was of his own misfortunes. But the dangerous solace of insensibility, luckily for him, did not last. The keen cold air, penetrating like a knife, aroused him. As he woke he attempted to rise, but he seemed benumbed. Then he bethought him of his fractured limb, and he soon arrived at the comprehension that he was helpless. The idea is perhaps one of the most overwhelming that can come to a strong man. There is in it a mingling of humiliation which is worse than pain.

'I often thought,' he soliloquized to himself, 'that there would be something grand in dying a soldier in arms for France, but faith it's like a babby in arms I feel. And by the hokey, too, what makes me more like a babby, the one thing it seems to me I want at this instant minit is a dhrink.'

Mike's soliloquy was interrupted by a groan.

'Oh, if that bullet out of that—that mithereloose—was the ball of a frind, I can only say that right leg below there is like the limb of an inimy. The devil a fut that ever kicked at my shins gev me such pain. O-o-h.'

Lightening the load as well as he could by thus unpacking his heart in words, Mike spent, however, but a sorry time of it. An hour had gone by, and gradually his soliloquies fell off into an occasional sentence, and at last the deadly chill which had seized upon his lower members, and

had at least compensated by dulling the keen sense of his pain, appeared to be stealing up to his heart. Then he fell off again into the lethargy from which this time, if seriously prolonged, there would be no waking. He was awakened however. He felt a gurgling in his throat, and a hot glow which seemed like fire sent through his frozen limbs. He felt a hand upon his heart and another upon his wrist, and he became conscious of men standing around him and regarding him attentively.

‘He is not only alive, but his pulse is strong. He has merely fainted from the pain and the cold. Lift him up. Gently, gently.’

Mike looked with deep interest at the speaker. As yet his senses were scarce sufficiently restored to have a full appreciation of the rescue that had come to him, but he had a vague consciousness that he was receiving useful help, and his native curiosity was already awake. The person who spoke was in appearance strikingly different from all the surroundings amidst which Mike had recently passed his time. The military uniform had become almost the sole external to which he was accustomed, and here in the midst of a battle scene he would not have dreamed of any other. But there was nothing military in this. The tall figure was surmounted by a hat with wide flapping leaf and white bands, and was enveloped in a long cassock. On the arm the Geneva cross

was conspicuous. It was one of the Christian Brothers, who had attached themselves to the ambulance of the press.

As the bearers raised Mike into the litter, the Brother asked softly how long he had been wounded and where.

Mike, who had quite recovered his consciousness, informed him. 'Ah,' he said, 'you are fortunate. Many of your wounded comrades are already dead of the cold.'

A search was made in the spot where Mike was found, at which, from his recumbent position, he looked anxiously. He saw the Brother stoop over several of his companions, and though he could not see the bodies themselves he knew by the shake of the head which terminated the inspection what the decision was. When the searched was concluded the Brother came to Mike. 'How many of you were there in this corner?'

'Twelve.'

'There are ten corpses there. Five have died from exposure after wounds, five appear to have been killed outright. Where is the other?'

'Ah, the best and bravest of us. Taken prisoner while trying to help me.'

'Then we had better move down the slope.'

As he was borne down to the ambulance cart, Mike observed the costume that had at first struck him as so strange repeated by hundreds. The



Christian Brothers seemed everywhere, on their knees beside the wounded, separating the dead from the living—performing in fact all the offices which make a non-combatant acquainted with the peril and suffering of a battle-field.

The road by which the ambulance descended bent a little towards the west, and therefore crossed the German line. As they passed this space a bullet struck the handle of the litter.

‘Ha,’ cried the Brother, ‘the Prussians are firing upon us.’

While he spoke he had half-turned round to look back at the advanced post of the enemy from which the shots had come. ‘It is possible,’ he said gently, ‘that it was at some of our forces farther down they were firing, and that the shot was not designed for us.’ He had scarcely finished the sentence when he staggered and fell on his side. The bearers paused. They were about to look to the fallen monk when another of the brothers ran hastily over, and stooping lifted his head upon his knee. Mike, watching excitedly, surveyed the countenances before him, one glowing with anxiety, the other pale with the paleness of death. The face which was lifted up from the ground for a short sad moment was more than tranquil, something like a smile played upon the livid lips, which seemed to the fancy of the watcher to indicate that the small stream of blood oozing from the heart had been but the gate through

which a pure spirit passed into a joyful immortality. That which bent over it had sorrow in every line.

A groan escaped from the breast of the kneeling frère.

'Oh, my good, my dear—dear Louis. How could they have the heart to slay thee?'

'Was the gentleman your brother, monsieur le frère?' asked Mike.

'Ay, indeed,' was the answer, as he rose slowly and reluctantly, 'my brother in the flesh as in our calling—we were the children of the same mother.'

'The infernal scoundrels!' roared Mike. 'Monsieur, wait till I have this leg under me again——'

'Hush, hush. Perhaps they did not know it was an ambulance. At all events, we must take patiently the sorrows that God sends us. In my first grief I was hasty, for oh, it is hard to bring the heart to bear such a shock and grief as this—my sweet and gentle Louis!' Here an uncontrollable fit of sobbing mastered the speaker. After a little, however, he recovered himself, and had regained his natural serenity of manner. 'Go,' said he, addressing the bearers, 'take this wounded man down to the hospital cart. I will wait here until assistance comes to have the body of my brother borne away.'

‘Monsieur,’ said Mike.

‘Well, friend.’

‘Would you raise your brother’s arm to me that I may kiss his hand before I go?’

The monk was at first amazed, then a pleasant expression flitted over his troubled face. He bent and raised the flaccid arm, and placed the dead hand within Mike’s grasp. The soldier seized it and kissed it vehemently.

‘Monsieur,’ he cried, ‘I wouldn’t go out of my way to kiss the hand of any king in Christendom; but he has lost his life saving mine. That is the hand which brought me help when I lay helpless. I am sure it is the hand of a saint!’

The brother smiled gently. ‘You have excellent dispositions and a good heart,’ he said. ‘My dear Louis was, I know, well-prepared for death; I pray humbly that your words, hasty as they are, may prove true. Go, good soldier. Adieu.’

The bearers proceeded, and Mike as he looked back saw the living brother kneel by the side of the dead one. More than one bullet passed him by, for the German outposts were still keeping up a dropping fire, but he heeded them no more than the corpse over which he bent.

Half-a-mile farther down they reached a cart into which Mike was transferred. The shifting caused him intense agony, but he bore it well and did not allow a groan to escape him. It was not yet ready to proceed as its ghastly burden was

not quite complete, and Mike with curious eyes surveyed the scene around him. The boom of the cannon was still in his ears. It seemed to fill the air in fact, though it did not sound so formidably close as it had done some hours before. All around him were carts like his own, and litters into which wounded men were being passed. Up the slope were skirmishers exchanging shots with some Germans who seemed to occupy posts on the top of the slope, while between him and the river was an immense force—men, horses, guns—through which a kind of restless activity seemed to prevail.

‘Are you thirsty, soldier?’ said a voice near to Mike’s ear.

‘Oh, yes.’

‘Here then,’ and the speaker put between Mike’s parched lips a refreshing drink.

Again it was a Christian Brother. He was comparatively young; his face did not indicate more than twenty-five years, and even the broad flaps of his hat could not conceal its comeliness. But it was not its mere beauty of feature that struck the beholder so much as a sort of intense, feminine gentleness which characterized it.

‘I thank you, sir,’ said Mike, ‘never was a drop more welcome, but surely this isn’t a place for the like of you, that aren’t strong.’

The Brother laughed. ‘Oh, I am strong enough.’

‘But aren’t you afraid, sir?’

‘Afraid!’ and his gentle brown eyes opened wide. ‘Afraid to do God’s work, afraid to save men where others are not afraid to kill them! Why should I be?’

Mike shook his head. The problem was too much for him, but he watched with interest the light, slender form as it passed amongst the carts distributing relief as it went. Mike’s interest was aroused, and he was glad to see the young Brother approach again the cart where he was. Presently he saw him stoop, and take up something heavy. At the very moment he heard a soldier exclaim in a loud and excited voice.

‘Monsieur le frère, monsieur le frère; fling it away, it is an obus!’

‘I know it is.’

‘It may explode on you.’

‘It probably would if I let it fall on ground which is as hard as steel, but here it will not be likely to do harm,’ and as he spoke, he walked over to a small stream which was flowing down to the Marne, and deposited it softly in the water. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘there is no danger of its exploding,’ and returned, as a matter of course, to the duty he had momentarily interrupted.

‘Mr Mahony,’ said the occupant of the cart to himself. ‘I think you had a purty good notion of your own pluck, but ’pon my honour, I don’t

feel at all sure that you'd put that big bit of mischief out of the way as coolly as that young frère you were troubled about. But I suppose it's the good conscience. I dare say there's hardly anything to speak of between him and an angel.'

## CHAPTER V.

## IN CAPTIVITY.

AS Michel was hurried off his heart was full of rage and grief, but sorrow for the misfortune of his friend swelled up even higher in his breast than the feelings produced by his own misfortune. He had, however, accustomed himself and his companions to a Spartan dominancy over emotion, and his presence of mind soon returned. His intention had been to fight to the death rather than fall captive into the hands of the enemy. This was not merely that he feared the rigours of imprisonment, though to a man accustomed as he was to free range and the utmost enterprise, confinement had a peculiar terror. But there was a shame about the captivity he thought which he could ill endure, while, furthermore, he had many reasons for believing that he had been marked out by the foe, and that a distinct and special vengeance was intended for him. These latter motives, however, and the new position in which he found himself, aroused the combative spirit within him, and he rapidly resolved that he would cheat the Prussians of their in-

tended revenge. These thoughts and resolutions had to be pondered and arrived at while he was being hurried at a rather swift place over a hundred yards of ground, with shells bursting above his head and the whizzing of French rifle bullets always in his ear. His first thought was to get rid of his papers. These not only contained his real name but the special authorization he had received to carry out an independent command, the discovery of either of which would have been fatal. They were in his breast-pocket, and they were small enough to be concealed in the hollow of the hand; but he knew that they should be small, indeed, if on his person, to escape the vigilant eyes of his captors.

The ground over which they were passing was that on which he and his party had had such a sorrowful experience of the power of the mitrailleuse—land partly furrowed by the plough, partly laden with vines and orchards. If he could get but a moment at which the eye of some of his captors was not on him it would have been a simple thing to fling the little packet into the thick bushes. But this was out of the question. It seemed to him impossible that any action of his could go unnoticed. As they moved along they perceived a small stream, the same into which, some hundreds of yards lower down, Mike had seen the Christian Brother drop the obus. Here it flowed upon a dead level, not having reached the slope



which carried it brawling into the plain beneath, and its dull course had caused an accumulation of thick ooze beneath one bank. Michel's quick eye took in the fact like a flash. Upon the very edge of the bank he stumbled and fell, his right hand coming under him. The Saxon who was immediately in his rear, with a loud oath, fell over him, but rose again nothing the worse save for the ducking. Michel's right hand was buried in the mud, and to extricate himself he was obliged to use his left. As he drew out the right hand it deposited the papers and the left plastered them over so that discovery was impossible.

'That is one trick gained!' he said to himself.

The angry Saxon, when Michel had arisen, struck him a blow, but he heeded it little. They were now almost completely out of range of the French fire, and they had come up with a large force of the Saxon army corps. Here commenced the search. It would almost seem as if it had formed a part of the training of the German army. Michel, a habitually temperate and saving man, in this respect a typical French peasant, had bought himself a watch, and carried also with him some money. These were gone in a twinkling, and, lest any one should be anxious about their fate, it may be stated here that he never saw them again. A piece of dry bread he had in

his pocket was left to him—that was all. His captors were well-fed and did not want it—otherwise they would have taken it.

The retrograde movement was continued from this point for nearly two hours, when Michel found that they reached the main body of the Saxon army, and here he saw, with a sense of deep sadness, a considerable number of his countrymen prisoners. Their depressed look, especially that of the officers, intensified the sorrow in his own breast. Like him they had all been plundered to the minutest article before he joined them.

A hoarse voice gave orders that the prisoners should form, and they did so. A march more regular and less hurried than the retreat commenced, and no halt was made until they found themselves at Lagny, about ten miles distant from Paris. Here the prisoners were hurried into the church, where they found others taken in that day's fight to the number of two or three hundred in all. As Michel entered he heard a loud clamour. A dozen men out of the crowd, soldiers of various grades, were hurling epithets of contempt at an officer who sat with his head buried in his hand, scarcely heeding their reproaches, as it would seem. Michel asked hastily what was the meaning of the uproar.

One of the crowd told him the officer was the

captain who had permitted himself to be surprised that morning, and 'through whom,' he added bitterly, 'we are all now prisoners.'

A German corporal amongst the escort seemed to look with amazement at the proceedings. 'Der Teufel!' he exclaimed, and then added in good French, 'if that occurred in our army the herr officer would be degraded and probably be shot, but the herren soldiers who are abusing him would probably be shot also.'

Michel, who had by this time approached the group, said in a quiet but firm tone, 'This railing is making us contemptible in the eyes of the enemy.'

The unfortunate officer looked up at Michel with a grateful glance; the Prussian corporal observed him keenly. Michel allowed himself, as it were, to be effaced in a corner of the church, for he did not care to attract too much observation. But he did not find peace where he sought it. The corner he had chosen was rather darker than the remainder of the building, and he did not at first notice a tall young officer who was walking up and down with an excited air. He wore the uniform of a lieutenant. At the end of his promenade were seated two German soldiers, smoking and conversing, but they seemed to keep a special and watchful eye upon his movements. Presently there entered a German officer of superior rank, with a considerable following. A tremendous

commotion ensued. The German soldiers rose and stood in their attitude of stiff respect; the prisoners indulged in all the excitement of expectation of something they knew not what. The officer marched straight to where the Frenchman was keeping up his rapid pace to and fro and, with a harsh voice and with broken expressions, said to him, 'Do you know with what you are charged?'

'I have heard it vaguely,' said the young man, drawing himself up with a proud attitude.

'Well, you shall know it clearly. You are charged with having broken your parole at Sedan; you are charged with having shot German soldiers whom you had got as prisoners.'

'But it is an infamous calumny,' thundered out the young man.

'A calumny!'

'Yes, some of your people have brought a wretched boy to a cabaret, and induced him to tell lies.'

'You had better not be insolent.' Then turning to those about him the German officer added, 'bring forward this lad.'

There was a movement, and from the midst of the German soldiers there was produced a boy of about eighteen, of small growth and with weazened, sharp features. As he approached he seemed to the stern eye of the German to be trembling, for his gait was feeble and tottering. 'What do you fear?' he asked in his harshest tones.

The boy looked up and was unable to speak.

‘Speak out,’ cried the German.

‘Do you not see?’ exclaimed the French officer, ‘the wretched boy has been made drunk, otherwise he would never have dreamed of inventing so scandalous a lie.’

The German officer gave a furious look at his own party, then at the French accused; finally with a curse he bade them fling that young beast somewhere that he might sleep off his debauch, and dashed himself out of the church. Shortly after several of the prisoners were sent for one by one, and it was understood that they were examined with a view to discovering whether the accusation against the French lieutenant, made by the miserable boy, could be sustained; but each and all of the prisoners declared on their return that they had contradicted the accusation so far as they could. All watched the event with great curiosity, but Michel with peculiar interest. He thought it not impossible he might soon have the same peril impending over his own head that threatened the lieutenant.

By-and-by the German colonel returned and again, in his harsh voice, addressed the young lieutenant. ‘I have examined some others of your countrymen,’ he said.

‘Well?’ returned the other proudly.

‘They are not of a story with the first.’

'Of course they are not, for the wretched lad was lying.'

'I do not know. The others are as likely to be lying.'

The Frenchman made a gesture of disdain.

'I tell you,' went on the colonel furiously, 'that I strongly suspect the boy is telling the truth after all.'

'And that I, and the several soldiers you have called out to question, are stating what is false?'

'Yes.'

'Very well,' replied the young man coolly. 'If I were not a prisoner you would not dare say that to me. As I am a prisoner, and you are at liberty to say what you choose, I will not reply,' and he turned his back upon the colonel.

'Come hither,' called the colonel, in a roar.

Several German officers of different ranks came rushing over.

'Observe,' he cried, 'that fellow is to give no parole. Let him be closely watched until he is landed in prison, or until we find out the truth, for which I believe he ought to be shot.'

The young man shrugged his shoulders with contempt.

'Take care he does not evade again, or it shall be worse for whoever is neglectful.' And with a few additional roars he betook himself from the church.

His injunctions were carefully heeded. The watch within the church was doubled, while sentinels were posted at every corner outside. The prisoners for the most part looked apathetically on, their reflections not being much disturbed by meals. A hunch of black bread and some water was given to each. Those who had their watch coats with them were left them to sleep in; those who had not were left to shift for themselves as best they could.

Buried in sad reflections, Michel said to himself, as he stretched upon a bench, 'Ah, how I miss my gay, light-hearted, brave comrade.'

## CHAPTER VI.

## A MELANCHOLY MARCH.

A BUGLE call awoke Michel from the uneasy slumber into which he had fallen upon his hard couch. For a moment, as he started up, he fancied that he was about to fall once again into the battle ranks of his own countrymen, but a glance around soon undeceived him. In the gloomy light of a December morning he looked on the shivering figures of the prisoners, and there was no mistaking their condition. Free men, preparing even for the most desperate fight, could not wear the down-trodden, woe-begone look of these captives. The privations which their captors had inflicted, added to the sense of imprisonment, formed a double load of misfortune that seemed, for the moment at least, to have crushed out of them all heart and spirit.

Shaking himself together, Michel went promptly to the spot where the captives were ordered to form. His knowledge of German enabled him to comprehend quickly the orders given, and so spared him many a painful humiliation.

When the prisoners were mustered, each was



again furnished with a piece of black bread, as his provision for the day. Then they were formed into rank, and marched out of the church. On emerging from it they found the escort ready. In the front marched a strong detachment of Saxon infantry, and the rear was brought up by a similar force, while at each side rode a guard of lancers. As they marched in the early morning through the long street of Lagny windows were thrown up, and through them might be seen peering women's faces full of pity. But there was no sound. The sternness of the invader had cowed the people of the places where they stayed, and only silent curses followed their footsteps.

Michel's habitual temperance and natural hardihood enabled him to bear privation without inconvenience, and he felt little the mere physical annoyances to which his position subjected him. But as they went along his heart beat with pity for those less fortunate than himself and with indignation at their treatment. The slightest attempt at halt or interruption of his march by a prisoner was punished with brutal insolence. Many of the prisoners were part of the hasty, ill-disciplined levies raised for the defence of Paris without the physique or training of soldiers. Michel had observed with wondering a little man, considerably over forty years of age, of weak appearance, and altogether most unsuited for the hardships of campaigning. He had exchanged

a few words with him the evening before in the church, and now he found himself alongside him, the little man being on the outer side of the rank.

‘Have you been long a soldier?’

‘No,’ answered the little man with a lighting up of the eye. ‘No, but I ought to have been years ago, for my nature is military and my aspirations heroic. But cruel—though, ah,’ he interrupted with a sigh—‘the best, at the same time—of parents, apprenticed me to a barber. Why did I not run away from the unworthy trade, you will say?’

Michel protested he had no notion of asking the question.

‘Ah,’ he continued, ‘that is a long story which I will tell you some day. But when the war broke out and the siege commenced’—Here the small soldier was interrupted with a desperate fit of coughing—‘I saw my opportunity. No national guard, no mobiles for me. I would have the line, and behold me entered. But,’ he went on again with a sigh, ‘I fear me, I have waited too long. I found it hard to get into the drill. I have the spirit—*ma foi*, yes, the heroic spirit—but the chassépot was heavy in my hands. Then, strange to say, nothing seemed to fit me. The redingote seemed too long, the gaiters too wide, the *souliers* too big—for I have pretty feet, observe, *ami*—and these gross shoes hurt them sadly. But I am strong’—Here another burst

of coughing interrupted him—‘ah, you notice that cough, to be sure; but it is nothing. I have been enrhumé since the first night I went on guard, that is all, but these accursed souliers, ah,’ and he groaned.

Michel looked wonderingly and compassionately at the poor soldier, who appeared almost as if he were masquerading, so unsuited did he seem to bear the terrible burden of a military life. There was a hectic flush in the cheek, and a palpable weakness in the limbs which contrasted strongly with the high aspirations he uttered.

‘Do you know?’ he whispered, as if afraid of being overheard. ‘I was scarcely sorry at being made prisoner, I was so wearied out with that terrible chassepot. It is not that I am weak, you know,’ he added hastily, ‘but it is so irksome to carry.’

‘Ah, no doubt.’

‘And I should be almost happy now if it were not for these dreadful souliers, so gross they are for my pauvres petits pieds.’

Thus chattering he went along, but the awful shoes afflicted him more and more. Michel pitied him heartily, but could do nothing to help his small companion, whose affliction increased at every step. At last the sufferer stooped to try if he could fasten more firmly on his blistered feet the torturing shoes, when alongside him there was a bellow and a curse, and a lancer struck him

heavily with the butt end of his lance upon the back. The little man sprang up writhing, and was about to dash upon the soldier, when Michel grasped his arm, and whispered 'patience.'

And patience had to be exercised along the melancholy route. At the smallest pretext of irregularity on the part of the captives the lance or the musket barrel was used, and as the starving prisoners grew fainter, and less able to keep pace with their escort of horse and of well-fed infantry, oaths and blows were redoubled.

Amongst the prisoners was one whom Michel had not seen in the church. He was a tall, middle-aged man clothed in the ordinary garb of a peasant. When the prisoners were first marched out, Michel observed that he was brought from some other place of confinement, and that he was kept apart from the rest, being specially guarded by four bayonets in front and four in the rear. This distinction Michel understood was scarce intended for the man's advantage, and he surveyed the unfortunate with much interest. As the horse soldiers marching at either side conversed over the heads of the prisoners, Michel listened with attention. He soon discovered that the man was regarded as a spy, and that there was every probability he would be shot.

'The wretch,' said one of the troopers, 'I heard him this morning protesting to our Oberst that he was only a simple peasant.'

‘The scoundrel.’

‘Ah,’ said the Oberst to him, ‘you shall be simply shot.’ Here the speaker burst out into a guffaw which was shared by his companion. ‘Ach, Himmel!’ he went on, ‘I wish you had seen his face when the Oberst said that.’ Here another shout of laughter rose so loudly that a stern order was passed back from the sergeant to stop the noise.


Michel’s heart was filled with pity for the poor creature thus spoken of. ‘If he be only a simple peasant,’ he said to himself, ‘it is terrible he should thus be slaughtered. Even if he be a spy, what has he done but try to serve his invaded country as best he could?’ And the fate of the spy troubled his breast as he moved along in the melancholy crowd.

On that day the escort reached Mitry, and another day of painful marching brought them to Dammartin. Michel’s little companion had so unmistakably lost all power that a countryman’s cart had been impressed to carry him. At Dammartin the church as usual was employed as the prison. For the two days the soldiers of the enemy appeared to think it a matter of no consequence whether or not their captives ate, but they were themselves well cared for. At their present halting place, however, a good meal was offered to the prisoners. The inhabitants, headed by the mayor, came in crowds offering them bread, meat,

wine, and all that they could think of. The famished prisoners rushed at the food with fury. The mayor himself, a stout man of fifty, with an honest countenance, but not too bright, seemed delighted at the pleasure afforded to his suffering countrymen. Seeing his good dispositions some of the officers whispered to him a question as to the possibility of managing the escape of two of the prisoners. He asked which, they pointed to the lieutenant and the spy. The mayor thought, shook his head, and sighed.


‘Ah,’ he said, ‘how could I? Observe every corner of this building is guarded by sentries.’

Michel was hearkening, but as yet no idea occurred to him. He had established during their halts a sort of intimacy with the spy, and felt a deep interest in him. They had arrived at the point when they could understand each other’s signals, as he had resolved if possible to help the poor wretch to escape his threatened doom. In a rather gloomy humour Michel strolled down to the porch outside which a sentinel was posted. He looked out but could see no help. Presently, however, there came by an old woman with a can of soup. She approached the church. It was evidently the gift of some good Samaritan for the prisoners. A thought at last struck Michel. He got the tin from the old woman, and then made a sign to the spy. The latter approached. ‘Fight me for the soup,’ said Michel in an under-tone.



The hint was taken. Struggling for the tin they approached the gate, Michel steadily shoving his opponent before him, but the combat apparently going on in a most embittered fashion. The sentinel, seeing a civilian trying to take the soup from a French soldier, looked upon the former as a raiding inhabitant of the town. He caught him roughly by the collar and thrust him from the gate. The spy uttered a half-suppressed curse, such as a sulky loafer disappointed of his prey might be expected to use under the circumstances, then walked coolly away. Michel, with the can to his mouth, as if eagerly partaking of his prize, saw him go the whole length of the street, until turning the corner he disappeared.

During the night the escort was changed. In the morning the new officer reviewed all the prisoners. He counted them over and over again, first in gross then in detail. He divided them into three ranks. He reckoned the officers, the non-commissioned officers, and the privates separately. All would not do. There was still one missing.



## CHAPTER VII.

## IN PRISON.

**R**AILWAYS are the triumphs of modern civilization, but there are circumstances under which a journey by rail may become even more disagreeable than a toilsome march on foot. Such was the case with the French prisoners taken at the fight of the Marne. From Soissons to the place of their final destination the journey was made on the railroad, but even in speed there was comparatively little gain, and in comfort none at all. The poor wretches were cast into horse boxes or cattle trucks without a seat and without covering of any sort. The December was more than usually cold, and they had the opportunity of enjoying it in all its bitterness. As they were dragged along past the houses and gardens and fields of a country that many of them knew well, their journey was interrupted many times. The franc-tireurs had been at work and had cut the railway in several places. In his despondency Michel sometimes almost wished that they had come unexpectedly on a chasm which would put an end to



his miseries and the miserable freight of the train together.

'What is this?' cries one of the prisoners to another.

'A stoppage, no doubt, to serve us out our hot soup,' is the reply.

'The Saxon captain is hunting in his baggages for some choice cigars for us,' remarks a third.

'You are all wrong,' cries a fourth. 'It is a telegraphic message from Count Bismarck to say the Prussian exchequer will be ruined, as Houdin over there got two ounces of black bread more than his share yesterday.'

Meantime the Germans below examine the rails. There is much cursing, stamping, and shouting. Then a bumping of heavy weights is heard, clinking of hammers, more shouting and some additional oaths, and the train again moves on. Again there is a halt at a station. This time it is to receive more prisoners. The Frenchmen shut up in their trucks can see the uniform, and they know or guess that they are from the army of the Loire. This kind of stoppage elicits no joke from even these elastic spirits.

In this fashion, continually halting, and moving slowly at the best, it reaches its final destination. Six days after leaving Soissons it rumbles slowly over a long bridge that crosses the Rhine. Michel looks with some interest at the sights

in the new land which he has been thus compelled to visit, but his thoughts are forward or backward, rather than resting on German cities. He had abundant time to think of his native village in the Vosges; of those who played with him in early youth; of his mother, whom he barely remembered; of the father whom he had so fondly cherished, and whose death had been a source of such bitterness; of big good-natured Jean, and the tears came into his eyes as he recalled to mind some insignificant play they had together as children, which capricious memory held with a tenacity it denied to other things of graver moment. What, he wondered, had become of Mike; and a shudder passed through his frame as he thought of his companion in so many fights stretched helpless amongst the dead and dying. Like a golden thread through the strands of a cord the thought of his Annette ran below all others, beautifying the present, and brightening the future with hope. The prison he was to occupy would in any case have given him an object of speculation, but on this point he could not choose but think, as all around him, especially as they closed the journey, there was talk of nothing else.

‘Well, comrades,’ said a sour, discontented-looking soldier, ‘you are at the object of your bragging—you are across the Rhine.’

‘For the first time, Père Mécontent,’ said a

young mobile gaily. 'Next time we shall have French drivers to our train.'

'Bah,' was the contemptuous response.

'I wonder,' said a simple-looking young fellow, 'what sort of quarters shall we get?'

A comrade looked at him with great gravity, and said, 'You have never been in a German prison before?'

'No.'

'Oh, then let me who have some experience give you a bit of advice,'

'Merci.'

'Do not on any terms consent to accept less than a suite of three apartments.'

'Eh?'

'And,' said another, 'you should enquire whether old Bismarck sent word to have the sheets for your bed properly aired.'

The youngster reddened and there was a roar of laughter at his expense, in the midst of which the train stopped. The prisoners were marched out of the station to their destination. When they reached it there seemed to be little inclination to continue the merriment that, in odd flashes, had lit up their dreary journey. It was not that their prison had any of the terrible aspects of the dungeon. It was simply a camp, in which they were to all appearance no worse off than soldiers generally, nevertheless it is quite possible to know a great deal of misery under a commonplace out-

side. On nearing the collection of huts to which they were marched a prisoner walking near Michel remarked, 'Come, it is not a fortress; that does not look so badly.'

'Psha,' said another, 'if it looked badly it would be honest; as it doesn't you will find yourself deceived.'

They were marched in detachments to the different huts. The moment they entered an order was given that they should take off their shoes. A heap of sabots was given them to choose substitutes from.

'What is this for, friend?' asked Michel of a German soldier.

'Because you Frenchmen have had such practice in running away from us Germans that you might be tempted to continue it at this side of the Rhine.'

Michel bit his lip and was silent. The taunt was not generous but there was enough of truth in it to make it peculiarly painful.

When the shoes had been got rid of there remained another ceremony to be gone through. A number, marked on white linen, was stitched on the right shoulder of each of the prisoners.

'You do not ask me what this is for?' said the German to Michel.

'No,' said Michel shortly.

'We have no legion of honour for you heroes, but this is the German decoration we award to you.'

Michel remained silent.

‘Aren’t you grateful for what we do for you?’ persisted the German sneering.

‘So grateful,’ answered Michel, ‘that I pray the day may come when we shall have an opportunity of returning the compliment. It will be all the more suitable, as in our country we only put these numbers on thieves.’

The German reddened, and in a moment probably would have resented Michel’s imprudent speech by a blow, when a fortunate commotion at the door of the hut announced the entrance of some great personage. It was indeed a very great man, being no other than the General Count Von Bubenstich who had ordered Michel’s father away as a hostage. Of this Michel was fortunately for himself not aware, otherwise it is impossible to say of what rash deed he might not have been capable. Being an aristocrat of great influence, and having been beside not found of any particular use, he was transferred from active service to a command which gave him charge of the prison here.

He entered the hut with a scowl. The wan faces of the prisoners awakened no compassion or generous feeling in his heart.

‘Von Karten,’ he called to an adjutant who accompanied him, ‘why are these rascals not on the works?’

‘Only just arrived I understand, gracious Count, and by the time they have had an afternoon meal it would be rather late.’

‘A meal—what have they had already? Tell me, fellows, what food have you got already?’

‘A piece of black bread was all we got to-day, herr general,’ said Michel, who was one of the few that understood his Excellency’s question, spoken as it was in German.

‘And what the devil more do you expect? March them off.’

Ticketed and sabotaged the prisoners were about three o’clock of a December evening drafted off to labour at a fortification that was being built round the camp, and they were compelled to work until the gloom of the December night fell upon them. Then they were marched back again to their barrack. There was a stove in the room, but no wood to put in it. The sentry was asked if any was to be had, and his reply was that he knew nothing about it. The keen December wind whistled through the joints of the hastily-constructed hut, sending a pang of cold to the very hearts of the foodless wretches who shivered under it. A mat and thin blanket were assigned to each. As there was no light, each sought at an early hour such refuge as this afforded him from cold and hunger. The result was what might have been expected. Even hardy old soldiers succumbed, but amongst the hasty levies raised by France, which numbered so large a proportion of men totally unfitted for a military life, the fatality was terrible.

In the grey of the December morning Michel was awakened by a miserable chorus of coughing

all round him. With a shiver he drew his watch coat about him, and raised himself from his pallet. Amongst the pitiful sounds there was one he thought familiar. Casting his eyes about, at last he espied in a corner, cowering upon his mattress, the form of the little barber.

Michel arose and went over to the poor bed, asking him tenderly how he fared.

As the little creature looked up Michel was startled. How the heroic light had faded out of the eyes ; how hollow the cheeks ; how wasted the form had become.

'Thanks, comrade,' said he in reply to Michel's inquiries, 'I see now it was too late for me to join the army. Ah, what a pity !'

'Yes,' said Michel, who thought he referred to his condition, 'I am sorry to see you so low.'

'But it is not that,' said the little man, 'I do not regret to die when I can be of no use, and it is better to die than remain a prisoner in the hands of these wretches.'

'I quite agree with you,' murmured Michel.

'But, comrade,' he went on, 'if I had not been put to that accursed trade—if my life had not been devoted to soap, lather, and shaving brushes by my dear but mistaken parents—what a soldier I would have made !'

As he spoke the eyes lit up again, and the haggard figure almost raised itself on the mattress. Then he fell back again panting and exhausted.

Michel gazed on the little man with pity, but could not regret the evident dissolution that was coming upon him.

While looking at this victim of war his ear was attracted by a dull, heavy sound. He looked, and through the open door he saw a long waggon drawn by two horses. Inspired by curiosity he walked across to know what it was. A cover prevented his seeing into the interior. The driver was an artillery soldier who was smoking contentedly, while two others who were with him jumped down off the seat.

‘What is that waggon?’ asked Michel of one of the men who entered the hut.

The man laughed. ‘Do you not know?’ he said.

‘No.’

‘Then you have not been long here?’

‘Only came last evening.’

‘Ah, you will know all about it soon! Only came last evening,’ said he, ‘then I suppose you won’t have any passengers for us, yet. But we will come to-morrow morning and then I fancy from all this coughing I hear around me you will have a job or two for us.’

The truth flashed across Michel’s mind.

‘Keep out of our carriage as long as you can avoid it,’ said the man laughing again as he went back.

The cart went on, and as it passed Michel was



able to look into it through the back, which was open. He could see three corpses ; how many more there might be he could not tell.

‘ Alas,’ he said to himself, ‘ if my countrymen knew what lies before them in a German prison they would suffer themselves to be cut to pieces sooner than surrender.’

## CHAPTER VIII.

## TRAPS.

NOT many mornings had passed when the fatal cart came to carry off from the hut where Michel was bestowed the body of the poor little barber. Michel could not forbear a tear as the small victim of glory was borne to the corner where the French prisoners were buried. Strange to say, several others had died before him, though they appeared men of fairly strong constitution. They were for the most part mobiles from the country, accustomed to plentiful living, and who literally pined away upon the miserable allowance of food made to them.

Food was brought to them but once a-day. Sometimes it was black bread only, sometimes there was rice, sometimes dried vegetables were thrown in, and, when the officer of the day happened to be in a good humour, a little bad lard was given as a seasoning. It was a sickening sight to see the entry of these meals. The old soldiers took the matter easily enough; long habituated to rough times and occasionally to insufficient food, they disliked the thing but bore

it patiently. It was different, however, with the young mobiles. Disgust at the food would struggle in their faces with the voracity of hunger, and they seemed divided between a desire to fling the wretched meal at their gaolers and the cravings of a ravenous appetite.

A veteran named Bonnivet, who had run through many of the Algerian campaigns, was particularly disgusted at the weakness of his young countrymen, and used to rail at them unmercifully.

‘See,’ said the vieille moustache, ‘I should not mind your gluttony if you did not expose us.’

‘Gluttony! God help us.’

‘Yes, gluttony. Has not the beneficent German Government provided you with a daily allowance of food? and yet you are not content.’

‘Content! Who could be content with the rations of a baby?’ cried a young mobile whose broad frame spoke of native strength, but whose shrunken and withered skin showed that the flesh on his bones had wasted away.

‘Bah, if you are not content itself—if you cannot live on what you have got, die decently like a man, and do not be disgracing the French army by begging as I saw you yesterday.’

The young fellow reddened.

‘I saw him and others with him,’ continued the veteran cruelly, ‘go beg from these fat rascals of Prussians while they were licking their

chaps after dinner; yes, and the greasy rogues would take the platters they had finished, fill them with water, and then hand them to these wretches you see here. And then how the scoundrels would guffaw.'

'Is this true?' said Michel.

'True!' thundered old Bonnivet. 'True! You have only to look at his cheeks to know how true it is.'

'But,' stammered the young man, 'what were we to do?'

'Do!' again exclaimed the ferocious old warrior, 'do! starve and die, and be hanged to you, and not let it be said that French soldiers went begging to a lot of boors like those Prussians there.'

'Ah, friend,' said Michel, 'do not be too hard on these poor fellows. Hunger is difficult to bear and excuses many things.'


The old fellow had a considerable respect for Michel, and therefore allowed his wrath to subside into a series of growls, while the mobile with passionate earnestness exclaimed, 'I know well that they want to kill us—that they do it deliberately.'

'A lesson to us, ami, should it ever again be our luck to have a weapon in our hands, to die bravely before the foe, in preference to being starved to death by him.'

From certain inquisitive glances directed at him now and then Michel had got the idea that he

was suspected by his gaolers. He had taken the precaution to change his name from the period of his arrest. Anxious to let his friends in his native place know of his whereabouts, he wrote a letter; not to his own village but to one a couple of miles removed, where a cousin closely intimate with his family lived. After detailing his adventures he wound up with the lines, 'tell all this to Gros Jean, and that I am much changed, Michel Stolp.' His brother was perfectly well known by the soubriquet he had applied to him. Upon his comrades he impressed the change of his name, and in every act took precautions to prevent the enemy making discovery of his identity. They were not unnecessary, but a great grief had to come upon him before he discovered how much they were required.

From his first arrival at the camp Michel had found himself an object of more than ordinary attention amongst the Prussians, and he had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that his identity was suspected. On the day after he had heard the newspaper read with its fatal intelligence, he seemed to feel that the Prussians had read it too, and that he was regarded with yet more curious eyes than ever. His facility in speaking German had caused many of the Prussian soldiers to chat with him from time to time, but he did not encourage the practice much, lest it should get him into trouble. There was one



fine young fellow, a Hanoverian, between whom and Michel a considerable mutual regard had sprung up. He was tall, large-limbed, and gay. Michel fancied he perceived in him a resemblance to his brother Gros Jean, and loved the youth for its sake. The Hanoverian in his talk, too, had accidentally struck upon a vein from whence Michel's sympathy readily poured forth—he, also, was betrothed and felt keenly the separation from his intended wife.

This morning, somewhat to Michel's astonishment, the Hanoverian, who formed one of the escort to the party of prisoners at the works, gave Michel but a cold greeting. Michel, to whom it had been a keen pleasure to find some evidence of friendly feeling, even though in the ranks of the enemy, felt more mortification than he could express. After a while, however, he seized the opportunity of saying in a low voice, 'Why do you not speak to me?'

The Hanoverian replied in a tone equally low, but with much significance, 'Because it has been suggested to me to converse with you.'

Michel needed but a moment's thought to comprehend his meaning.

'They read the newspapers here,' continued the Hanoverian.

'Bah,' said Michel coolly, 'how can that affect me? The journals do not concern themselves much about persons of my class.'

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'So much the better for you,' said the Hanoverian, and the conversation ended.

As the day wore on the prisoners and the work they were engaged upon were inspected from time to time. There was nothing remarkable, therefore, in the fact that about mid-day several officers in a group approached. The one of the highest rank was a major; next him was a lieutenant who, as Michel glanced carelessly at them, appeared to be engaged in making a very animated and earnest representation to him. The senior officer walked with his eyes bent on the ground, a fashion which gave a peculiar sternness to his face. His left arm was in a sling. As they came within earshot of Michel the tone of the conversation lowered, and he could not catch its purport. But the major halting abruptly said in a brief, dry tone to his companion, 'where?'

The lieutenant nodded his head in the direction of Michel.

The major stepped close up to him, and looked sternly in his face. As he did so Michel immediately recognized the hard lines and the strong square form: over the face of the major, too, something like an uncertain gleam of recognition passed.

'Français,' said he in his hard voice, 'I have seen you somewhere before.'

'The herr officer has seen me before.'

'Where—when?'

‘On the day of the armistice my poor comrade, since wounded, and I, helped to raise the herr officer’s dead son from amongst a heap of corpses.’

A spasm as if he were struck by a shot passed over the hard visage. ‘Ah,’ said he, ‘it is true.’ Then he turned hastily to his companion. ‘That is a brave, gentle-hearted fellow ; it is impossible that he can be the devil whom you suspect,’ and he hurried away to a distant part of the works without casting another glance at Michel. The officer who had been talking to the major, however, did not leave without casting a keen parting glance at the French sergeant, who was gazing with interest at the departing form of the major he had seen last under such sad circumstances.

Were Michel’s mind free he would have felt gladness at the mere recognition of a face he had met under other circumstances, if only as a break in the monotonous horror of his life ; but the hints of the Hanoverian, and the evident purpose with which the major had been brought, as if almost to put him on trial for his life, gave him no small concern. He was brave. He could go to death in the battle-field without the quiver of a nerve. If his eyes were bandaged and the files stood before him with loaded muskets, prepared to obey the last fatal order, his cheek would not probably have shown a shade more of paleness. But there was something that appeared to him quite horrible



in the spying of these hundred eyes. In his own conduct there was, he knew, nothing that he could not justify to himself, but he was aware also that the enemy would look upon even the exact facts from a different point of view, and that moreover they had loaded the truth with innumerable exaggerations of brutality and treachery. He was not, however, of the temper to succumb. The more imminent the danger seemed the more determined was he to lose nothing through lack of courage or resolution. And as he thought over the matter, and the notion of baffling the enemy entered his mind, his spirits rose.

He was not long without being put to the test. Michel had been assigned to the cooking for the party that occupied his hut. This function relieved him a couple of hours earlier than the other prisoners from the labour on the fortification. He had scarcely settled to his task on the day of his meeting with the major than a friendly voice at the door of the hut called suddenly, 'Sergeant Voss.'

Michel calmly turned a quantity of very thin soup from one saucepan to another.

'Sergeant, Sergeant Voss, I say,' repeated the same friendly voice.

Michel poured the soup back again as if he were deaf.

Then he heard footsteps behind him, and a hand was lightly laid upon his shoulder, 'You are

the brave Sergeant Voss? Come, no shamming now.'

Michel turned round with an air of the most naïve astonishment, and saw the lieutenant who had indicated him to Michel's former acquaintance, the Major. 'Me! Sergeant Voss! herr lieutenant!' said he, 'why Voss, I heard, is from Lorraine, I am Stolp, I am from near the Vosges. My father was a peasant.'

'Come, come,' said the lieutenant, who had hoped by the suddenness of the call to induce Michel to betray himself, 'you need not deny your actions. Voss, your reputation is one to be proud of.'

'Voss's reputation,' said Michel stolidly, 'is that of a damned fool, who was always going out of his way for danger. For my part, I think it is more the duty of a soldier to stick to his ranks, and win with them if he can, or go to prison with them if he can't.'

The lieutenant looked puzzled at Michel, then with a sneer said, 'Clever as you are, my fine fellow, I will find you out.' He had lost his temper.

It was the afternoon of the next day when Michel was rather surprised to find himself the recipient of a cigar from the hands of a grim-looking German sergeant. 'You do not get too abundant a supply of wood here,' remarked the latter as he seated himself on a bench near the

stove, and by way of sign of comradeship lit his own pipe with the big china bowl.

'No,' said Michel, 'we could put up with a little more, without being absolutely roasted.'

'Ah, our lieutenant,' naming the officer who had been endeavouring to entrap Michel, 'is a stingy beggar. It is all his doing.'

Michel thought rapidly for a moment. 'A mere lieutenant cannot have much power over the prisoners. This is to make me confiding, and induce me to pour out my feelings. En garde.' Then he observed aloud, 'stingy!' He seems to me very good-natured. He has been quite friendly to me, when he talked to me—only,' added Michel with a laugh, 'do you know for whom he took me?'

'No.'

'Le Sergent Voss.'

'Phew,' whistled the Prussian sergeant. 'Was Voss a good shot?' asked he suddenly.

'Parbleu, I should say from what I heard he was.'

'We have many better shots amongst us, I am certain.'

'I believe you Germans are very good shots.'

'Are you yourself?'

'Me!' said Michel, with a frank, hearty laugh. 'I don't know. When I first went into action I used to shut my eyes, but I have got over that long since. Now I blaze away when the word to

fire is given. I can't see my bullets, but I dare say they do as much execution as anybody else's.'

'Surely,' thought the Prussian to himself, 'if this were the fellow he would have more vanity about his skill as a marksman.'

The remainder of the Sergeant's conversation failed to elicit anything further, so he rose to depart with the cordiality of his manner considerably decreased. For that day the attempts upon Michel were at an end, but they did not cease. They took all shapes. Two days subsequently the prisoners were all in their hut dressed in line to receive letters. A non-commissioned officer called out the addresses. Of a sudden, in the midst of his list, he sang out 'Le Sergent Voss!' It was a sore trial to the steadiness not only of Michel, but of his companions. No one, however, stirred, and a letter was put back again into the bag, the Prussian remarking coolly, 'Why did they write, if Sergeant Voss was not here?'

Several of Michel's comrades were plied with questions—even with bribes—to declare that he was Voss, but they were staunch, and no admission could be wrung from them.

One day his old acquaintance the lieutenant for the second time touched Michel lightly on the shoulder, 'Follow me,' he said.

Michel rose as directed, and left the hut after the officer. When he got outside the door he saw a party of a dozen soldiers with fixed bayonets

standing before it. He was ordered to fall in, the guard was divided, four men in front, and four in rear, and the word was given to march. He had thought, at first, of asking what was the meaning of this, but he promptly concluded he would receive no satisfaction, and to spare himself needless humiliation he kept silence. He had not long to wait before he saw at least one part of the object. The march was in the direction of the city, whose towers he saw grow nearer and nearer to him. Then he entered the narrow streets, trode its ill-smelling bouldered pavement, encountered the looks of curiosity which were cast at him by passers-by, who were, however, too much accustomed to the sight of French prisoners to be much excited, and found himself at last at the entrance to the citadel. Here he was ushered through many passages into a cell. He looked at it by the dim light. It was eight feet by four. Upon a bench was a lump of black bread and a cruet of water.

‘Sergent Voss,’ said the lieutenant, ‘this is your hotel until you have laid aside your modesty, and openly claim credit for your magnificent exploits.’

## CHAPTER IX.

## SHORT COMMONS.

THE snow was lying heavily on the ground when the fourgon which bore Mike Mahony and a number of other wounded entered the portal of Fort Nogent. Night had fallen, and the gloom of December was added to the bitter cold. A temporary halt was allowed, and some little tendance given to the wounded, but there was no room for hospital accommodation, and the convoy had to seek the city. Mike had made some few visits to the interior of the gay capital when his duties at the fort had let him free, but his knowledge of it was slight. Nevertheless, stranger as he was, and passing in the darkness, even to him it seemed as if a change for the worse had come. For one thing, the apprehension of scarcity of fuel had already caused the supply of gas to be diminished, and but few of the public lamps were lit, while hardly a gleam came from the shops or private houses.

But there was no lack of animation. The convoy entered the city by the *barrière*, and then moved up in the direction of the *Hotel de Ville*.

As it neared the more populous parts, the numbers of people in the streets became strikingly large, until at length it seemed as if all Paris was on the foot-way. Amid the heavy rumble of the waggon Mike could hear the hum of incessant talk, not chat, but a wild, excited discourse, accompanied by gestures of the most animated character. His faculties were too dulled by the persistent consciousness of pain to allow him to direct a steady attention to what was going forward, but in a narrow street some casual obstacle compelled the waggon to halt, and draw up close to the foot-way. Then he had no difficulty in distinguishing voices and phrases.

'Eh, mon dieu,' said a woman's accents, 'nos pauvres blessés.'


'Ah, the heroes of the Marne!' cried a man's voice.

'How they must suffer,' said another woman.

'Hah!' interjected a dirty-looking man, 'they are no doubt the patriots of Belleville—glorious Belleville.'

'Belleville be damned,' growled a soldier of the line with a broken arm, who was sitting upright on a heap of straw, 'your Belleville patriots ran away, leaving their muskets to the Prussians.'

'Infamous!' shouted the dirty man, 'you are an aristocrat, I suppose, and want to belie the people.'



'Aristocrat,' laughed the soldier, 'it looks like it to see me here a piou-piou.'

'Nevertheless, it may be,' shouted the dirty man angrily, 'several of the hated order have gone into the ranks, with the view of throwing scorn on the people.'

'Well, your Bellevilles have thrown scorn on themselves by abandoning a post to the enemy. I got my wound through their desertion.'

The dirty man raised his voice to a shriek. 'Ah,' he cried, 'A bas les infames, à bas les espions.'

Absurd as the cry was under the circumstances, it was not without its shadow of danger. Some boys for sport took it up, some women for excitement, and it began to swell into a chorus. The officer of the escort, however, called out with a stern voice, 'fix bayonets, clear the way there,' and the waggon was set in motion. The well-affected spectators set up a cheer which drowned the noise of the worser portion, and the dirty man was finally hustled out of the way. He cursed and swore. He denounced between his teeth les scélérats—les bandits—les aristocrates, and then in a cracked voice he bellowed out some bars of the Marseillaise, and, followed by half-a-dozen ragged urchins, and a couple of slatternly women, whom he called upon as the people, he plunged into the lanes leading up towards Belleville.



The fourgon moved on. Bitter as the cold caused by the snow was, the soft carpet it made upon the streets afforded some relief to the wretched burden within, sparing them many a jolt, though at the same time it delayed progress and raised obstacles of its own. The pain of Mike's hurt was intense, but it could not altogether repress the eager curiosity which was a leading characteristic of his mind, and he watched with growing interest the aspect of the streets and of the people amongst whom he passed. The great battle on the Marne was still the theme, as he could recognize, though he failed to catch the precise statements. As the enforced stoppages, however, became more numerous, he gathered more of the conversation. Once the fourgon rested opposite a brilliantly-lighted café. Within Mike could see two or three parties calmly playing dominoes, while the bulk of the company over wine, coffee, or eau sucrée, were discussing in an eager and excited manner what he felt to be the universal topic. Outside were a few shabby, pinched-looking persons, men, women, and boys. One of the men observed in an undertone, which Mike, however, was able to catch, 'See these fellows, how they riot, while the people starve.'

'Some are not drinking.'

'No,' replied the other bitterly, 'but observe them at their games. Do you think it is with an empty stomach they sit down to amuse themselves with those toys there?'



No answer was made to the question, and the speaker shuffled slowly away. Presently Mike saw two of the players rise, and approach the door. He could see them plainly. Both were rather advanced in life, and had the air of gentlemen.

'Peste,' said the first as he stood on the threshold buttoning his overcoat, 'how it snows!'

'Ay,' said his companion, 'a gloomy time for our poor fellows outside the walls.'

'And within, too,' remarked the other with a faint laugh.

'It is true,' was the reply with a sort of sigh.

'Come, don't be cast down, I have still a couple of slices of ham left, and thou, old friend, art welcome to a share so long as they last.'

'Ah, Ernest, it would be a shame to trespass on thy generosity. Besides, I assure thee cat is by no means the objectionable dish you think. I had some yesterday, chez Brice, and, done up with onions, I assure thee the thing is not so bad.'

A shudder passed through the listener, yet he said, 'No doubt our prejudices are very foolish, yet they are not easy to overcome. However, when my ham is gone I shall have cast down the last barrier against the practical. Come, therefore, to-morrow and help me to get rid of the food of prejudice.'

'Do not ask me.'

'I will. What signifies staving off starvation

for a day—and could I feed happily on dainties, and know thee to be in want?’

‘I accept thy invitation then, dear friend. At what hour is the banquet?’

‘Ah, let me see. It is late in the day before I can get bread. Say three o’clock.’

‘How art thou off for fuel? Our ham must be cooked.’

‘Oh, I am all right. I have still some of my book-shelves left. And if the worst comes to the worst,’ added the host with a laugh, ‘I have the manuscripts of my poems. The critics often asserted that they lacked fire; it may be one of the advantages of the evil time that I can give it to them—or they to it.’

‘I envy thee thy spirits.’

‘Ah, it is the ham, believe it.’

The other shook his head. ‘If it were not for old Cafénoir being magnanimous enough to remember his customers and allow us to play dominoes at his place without expending money, I think I should go mad.’

‘Do not think of it. The good time will yet come.’

‘Ah, I hope so,’ with a sigh.

‘At all events, there is one comfort, our soldiers are fighting bravely outside, and our people are bearing their privations steadfastly within.’

‘Ay, there is some consolation in that. Bon soir, mon ami.’

‘Au revoir.’

And the two old friends parted, hungry and cold, ‘but,’ thought Mike to himself, ‘neither of them has a notion of giving up. Bedad,’ he added, half aloud, ‘I think there’s as much courage in them two ould chaps as in our fellows that stand before the Prussians. As an Irishman bred and born, I’m naturally able to do without high feeding, but by the mortal I’d rather take my chance of standing before another mithereloose than have to dine off cat. I suppose when the docthor comes to have a turn at my limb I’ll howl or do something of the kind, for I’m not partial to being sawed through the legs, but I declare to the Lord if I was afthur ating that kind of vittles I rayly think I’d miow.’

Mike’s reflections were interrupted by a jerk of the waggon which began to move forward, and the renewed pain scattered his thoughts and stopped his soliloquy.

## CHAPTER X.

## A FRIEND IN NEED.

THE progress of the fourgon continued to be slow, the wheels getting clogged in the snow, and the obstacles increasing in number as they approached the quarter of the Hotel de Ville. Mike's curiosity had, therefore, abundant subjects of interest, and it never slept.

'Why do we delay now?' asked a faint voice from amongst the crowd of wounded.

'I cannot tell,' said Mike, 'but there seems some disturbance.' As he spoke the crowd before them opened, and there emerged from it an officer, evidently of rank, followed by two others of a lower grade. As he observed the lieutenant in command of the escort, he stopped and inquired hastily where he had come from.

'From Fort Nogent' was the reply.

'Are there many convoys of wounded?'

'I should think so. I am one of the first, but I have no doubt there are many behind.'

'What hospital are you bound for?'

The lieutenant mentioned the name.

'I fear,' observed the General, 'you will find them almost if not quite full. Many wounded

have already come in from Aubervilliers and St Denis. However, you can only try.'

As he ceased to speak, there came out of the crowd he had left, several figures in the uniform of the National Guard. A moment's glance showed that they were drunk. They came swaying and shouting in the direction of the waggon, evidently quite regardless of the presence of the General.

'Hurrah for Belleville!' said one.

'A bas all scoundrels who would defame the character of patriots,' shouted another.

One of them reeled up, stuck his arms akimbo, and with a voice he vainly endeavoured to render steady, he called out, 'General Clément Thomas, you have insulted the heroes of Belleville—you, one of the accursed aristocrats who have betrayed France. The glorious revolution is at hand. We shall begin by sweeping out the Prussians. Then—then, General Clément Thomas,—the nation will be at leisure to exercise its holy vengeance on such as you.'

'Oh!' half groaned the General to one of his companions, 'amongst all the misfortunes of the country these drunken brutes are one of the worst.'

'Do you hear, Citoyen Clément Thomas?'

'Yes, I hear. You are a pack of scoundrels, without discipline and without honour. Your cowardice has been a traitor to the defence of Paris, and one of the first acts to which I shall turn my

attention is to hunt you out of the army, to which you are a disgrace.'

A howl rose from amongst the National Guards. 'He has insulted the majesty of the people; he has outraged the heroes of Belleville; down with him.' Fortunately the escort was at hand, otherwise the General might have had reason to regret his somewhat imprudent speech. The lieutenant in command, observing the state of matters, called his men together and interposed them between the turbulent and the General.

'Thanks,' said the latter coolly. 'Do not delay. Your poor wounded are of a different stuff, and deserve all the help they can get. As for these creatures, the only good they can do is to devour each other, as they probably will.' So saying, with a rapid step he turned on his heel and disappeared, accompanied by the two members of his staff, the baffled rioters contenting themselves with sending an angry shout after him.

Some little time elapsed before the crowd had cleared, and the fourgon was at liberty to proceed. When they did move it was found that the period lost was of some consequence. On arriving at the hospital to which they were destined, a crowd of carts similar in appearance and burden to their own, lined the streets. The officer called a halt, and hastened up to the door of the hospital. Full half-an-hour had elapsed before he returned. Then he said that they must move on—the hospital was full.

As the announcement was made a faint sigh escaped from the lips of a soldier near Mike. Turning, the latter saw a poor lad whom he had tried to cheer during the weary journey. Now he saw the faint hope which seemed to keep a semblance of flush in his countenance disappear from his pale cheeks, and his lips grow livid. 'Oh, if I had only rest,' he moaned.

'Keep up, my hearty,' said Mike, good-naturedly. 'Keep up; it won't be long.'

'No,' said the other feebly, 'it won't be long,' and his head fell back in the stupor of insensibility.

'Halloa,' cried Mike.

But already the waggon was moving forward, and the noise it made, even with the dulling effects of the snow, drowned his voice. The waggon, however, stopped up again.

'Is there,' he called out, 'a good Christian who would give a drink of wine or brandy to a dying soldier?'

'You can't be very near death, my friend, with such capital lungs,' said a sneering passer-by.

'If you take wine or brandy it will spoil your remarkably fine voice,' said another.

'I declare to the Lord I was never half so sorry for my broken leg as I am now. I'd willingly break the other kicking ye, ye ill-natured beasts.' Then with a sort of laugh to himself he added, 'what a fool I am, to be sure. They consate I'm just a soldier that they're taking to



the guard for being drunk, and wants to cure himself by a hair of the ould dog.'

Turning to look at his ghastly companion, Mike, despite his recent discouragement, once more shouted.

A soft voice suddenly answered him by a question.

'Is it for yourself?'

'No, no. Look, can't you see that poor boy?'

In the gloom it was not easy to distinguish objects, but even then the white face of the lad shone so distinctly that there was no difficulty in seeing the reality of the need that existed.

'Here,' said the soft voice, 'I will trust you with this. Be honest with it, for it is precious.' And a brown, but small hand, enveloped in a black sleeve, here presented to Mike a tiny flask of brandy. 'It is precious,' said she, 'I have it only for the use of those who are in great extremity.'

'Give it here, give it here, for the love of God,' said Mike, almost snatching it from the offering hand. In turning himself round to place it in the lips of the fainting boy, Mike's bad leg got a wrench, which produced from him a deep groan, but did not make him pause even for a moment. 'Here, my poor lad,' he said, 'try this,' and he moistened the blue lips with the liquid, and then forced some drops through the half-closed teeth. After a little the effects of the

stimulant began to be evident, and the lad opened his eyes. 'Ha,' he said, 'I thought I was dead, but I am in fact better.'

'Of course you are,' said Mike cheerily. 'And here's what cured you, *mon jeune rasoir*. Try a drain more.' A second application of the flask added new life to the aspect of the young patient.

'Where did that come from?' he asked.

'Why, then, if angels dressed in black, I'd say it was from one of them. At all events it's from a young lady that's standing there, and now that you're better I'm going to return this trifle of brandy to her.'

'Soldier, I heard you groan,' said the soft voice, 'are you badly hurt?'

'Oh, yeh, no, *mademoiselle*, only a broken leg or so.'

'A broken leg! oh, you need refreshment yourself. Take a little. It is for the wounded.'

'No, miss; out of the question.'

'You had better—it is quite right you should do so; I am accustomed to attending the wounded.'

'Accustomed to attending the wounded! Why then God bless your pretty face—for pretty it must be if it's like your manners. But I couldn't drink a drop from that little bottle.'

'Why so?'

'Well, miss, you see a couple of fellows passing by began to sneer at me, as if, when I called

for a drink for this poor creature, I wanted it for myself. But I didn't. I don't say I mightn't like it well enough, but I wasn't thinking of it, and I wouldn't give it to any one—man, woman, or child—to say that I had an idea of taking a sup from that bottle. They're always speaking of my countrymen.'

'Your countrymen? You are not a Frenchman?'

'A Frenchman? What put that into your head?'

'Ha, surely I remember that strange accent. You are——'

'An Irishman, as sure as you are not.'

'That is Irlandais?'

'Why then you're exactly right.'

'Oh, Heavens, I shall faint; you are—you are Monsieur Mahony—Mike Mahony—good, honest, brave Mike Mahony,' and here the soft voice was choked with a passionate sobbing.

'And you—oh, the thundering, thick-headed fool that I am—and you—who else should you be, but Annette Beaune? Well, that I shouldn't know you—I declare after that if my own mother didn't know me it would be serving me right.'

'Oh, Monsieur Mahony—oh, Mike, I am so sorry to find you wounded.'

'Don't think twice about that, my dear, there's worse news, or as bad, at all events——'

'Michel?'——

‘Well, it’s not really bad, after all, you know——’

‘Tell me, tell me, what has happened.’

‘Just he is a prisoner—no more.’

A deep sigh broke from the girl, but there was a touch of relief in it as well as pain.

‘He is wounded, perhaps, beside?’

‘Oh, no, but it was chance that saved him. He laid aside his gun and stooped to raise me when I fell, and then he was caught helpless, but that saved him from being hurt.’

‘Ah, thank God. Where is he now?’

Mike’s answer would have added nothing to Annette’s information. As he spoke, a voice from behind called ‘en avant,’ the driver cracked his whip, and the fourgon moved forward.

## CHAPTER XI.

## AN ARISTOCRAT.

**B**EFORE the courtyard of a large gloomy-looking mansion the cart which bore the wounded stopped. The officer in charge looked up, and with some hesitation rang the bell. A porter looked through the grating and opened.

The officer asked with some embarrassment, 'Is this the Hotel de Villecourt?'

'Yes,' was the reply.

The officer paused for a moment. 'I have been directed hither,—' then with a jerk he continued, 'is it possible that this mansion has been converted into an ambulance?'

'It is true.'

'Ah,' said the officer with a sigh of relief, 'it is really the case. Then I hope you are not full.'

'We have a good many, I understand, but I will inquire.' And he rang a bell which communicated with the interior.

While this conversation was going on some loungers gathered around the outer gate. Looking across the courtyard they could see that it

was brilliantly lighted by two lamps, though gas had now become rare, owing to the lack of material for its manufacture.

‘Look,’ said one to another, ‘how the aristocrats burn gas for their festivities, while the people are compelled to trudge in the darkness through their narrow lanes and alleys.’

‘Festivities! no. There is probably no ball going on, but it is done merely to flout the poor—parading their riches in the eyes of those who have neither food, nor fire, nor light.’

‘Messieurs,’ said a blunt-looking man, who wore something of the appearance of a decent shop-keeper, ‘this aristocratic mansion has been turned by its owner into a hospital for the wounded. Yonder vehicle is not a carriage with grandly dressed young ladies, but a cart full of poor wounded soldiers.’

‘Bah!’ sneered the first speaker, ‘one of their infernal devices to catch popularity and to cheat the people out of their rights.’

As he spoke the officer returned, and the cart was wheeled under the porte cochère. The numbers had, during the few minutes that elapsed, increased, and the passage of the cart had caused a slight pressure of the crowd.

‘Why do you press upon me?’ growled the railer at aristocracy to his bourgeois neighbour.

‘You want to quarrel, mon ami,’ said the latter,

eyeing him contemptuously in the consciousness of strong arms and a stout pair of shoulders.

‘And if I did?’ said the hungry-looking demagogue.

‘If you did you would get the worst, *mon enfant*,’ said the stout man tranquilly.

‘A bas les aristocrates,’ cried the other, hoping to raise an *émeute* and get help, and he struck wildly.

The bourgeois with a single blow sent reeling backward the miserable man, in whose truculent sentiments probably hunger had some share. At the moment the cry of a woman was heard. The man in staggering had trodden heavily upon the foot of a young girl, and the sudden shock and pain had brought her to the ground. The honest bourgeois, with two or three other spectators, rushed to her aid, and raised her, while the porter from the mansion left his box, and came out to see what was the matter.

‘Are you hurt? Can you stand?’ cried several voices at once.

Her voice was at first faint as she answered that it was a trifle, but in a moment she had recovered and set herself free from the friendly hands which had aided to raise her. ‘I am better now,’ she added, and turning to one of the standers-by said, ‘will you kindly direct me to the Hotel de Villecourt?’

‘This is it,’ said the porter.

‘Ah! then I have a message for Madame la Marquise.’

‘Come this way,’ said the concierge, and he led the girl through the gate, which he quickly closed, to the great disgust of the spectators, some of whom, indeed, went directly away, while others remained for an hour or so outside, vainly expecting the occurrence of some new incident to compensate for the tame ending of that which had just gone off. A servant called from the mansion led the way across the courtyard. At the great door and beneath the shining lamps was the fourgon discharging its sorrowful burden. A couple of men-servants aided the soldiers of the escort to lift out the wounded. The girl looked with a fascinated attention upon the proceedings, though from constant habitude they had ceased to possess any very thrilling sensation for her.

‘Oh! take care,’ she said, ‘do you not see how the poor limb hangs down,’ as, moved by the groan of a soldier, she raised in her hands the bandaged leg which hung loosely over the arms of one of the bearers, showing him at the same time how to dispose of it with least pain to the sufferer.

‘Miss Annette,’ called the voice of the patient, ‘only for that twinge I’d try to say something nice to you, but it has taken my breath away.’

‘I am so glad to see you again, Monsieur Mike. I hope to have an opportunity of visiting you.’



The servant in attendance motioned Annette to follow him. They passed through a wide double hall, the ceiling of which was supported by pillars, and, as well as Annette could ascertain in the doubtful light, and in her speedy passage, pervaded by an air of gloomy grandeur. On the first floor they stopped at a door which the servant opened. 'Enter,' he said, and Annette walked in.

The apartment was one of vast size and great height. Annette had seen such in convents, but could not have believed in their existence in a mere dwelling-house. Its furnishing had a sort of antique majesty which impressed Annette's mind considerably; but, even if she had been in the humour to distinguish details, there was not light enough to do so. In the fireplace were a few logs which had burned down so low as almost to emit no heat. On a table near was a solitary candle which left the room almost in darkness, but threw a light which marked out strongly the figure of a lady who stood upright beside it. She was dressed in a material of neutral tint almost verging on black. It was neither prim nor old-fashioned, but essentially plain, with no ornament whatever. It did not need any to assure one at a glance that the wearer was a lady. She seemed to have almost reached sixty years, and her grey hair behind was gathered under a small lace cap. Her figure was slight like that of a young girl,

and being perfectly erect gave her an appearance of height, though in reality she was not tall. Annette was aware that she had before her a marchioness, one of those nobles who date their descent from the crusaders, and who, as adherents of the legitimate monarch, had withdrawn in proud retirement from the service of a country in which mad republicans, citizen kings, and play-acting emperors seemed to pass before them like the phantasmagoria of an evil dream. She had, therefore, expected to find a countenance whose haughty lineaments would strike her with awe. On the contrary, the expression that struck her most was sweetness. The gleam of the candle revealed the traits of the marquise with startling distinctness, and Annette fancied she could see in the large, dim-sighted eyes, the pale cheeks, the mobile, sensitive mouth, the traits of one who had suffered with resignation. She was not alone, as Annette had expected to find her. There stood before her, his képi in his hand, the lieutenant who had charge of the escort.

‘I am obliged to you, sir,’ she said, in continuation of a conversation of which Annette had not heard the beginning, ‘for having helped us in our task by bringing those poor wounded men here to-day.’

‘But Madame la Marquise—’ said the lieutenant with an embarrassed air.

‘Plait il?’

'I think it my duty to inform you of one thing.'

'What is that?'

'These men I have brought hither to-day—' and he paused.

'Eh bien?'

'They are all private soldiers.'

The Marquise observed him with some astonishment.

'Why do you tell me that? What does it matter?'

The lieutenant looked at her with an air partly of relief, partly of astonishment. 'Well, Madame la Marquise, I am a republican myself. I had heard you were an aristocrat, a legitimist, and I thought—I thought you would consider mere soldiers canaille—that you would not care to have them tended in your house.'

'Ah, sir, I am sorry you gentlemen of the republic think that of us. If we were aristocrats enough to think any mansion, or food, or tendance of ours too good for the brave men who are shedding their blood for France, we should deserve the hatred we seem to have met with.'

'Pardon, Madame.'

'And, sir,' she went on, the large, short-sighted eyes seeming to kindle as she spoke, 'do you know that my son—my only one—my only child,'—and a sob seemed to choke her utterance,—'is one of those canaille whom you

think I would despise. He is simple soldat, bearing a musket in the ranks.'

'Madame, I am humiliated.'

'No, sir. I pray do not think yourself so,' said the Marquise, her excitement passing away, 'you are only misinformed.'

With a low bow, the officer, whose embarrassment was increasing, was about to depart, when the Marquise said, 'Let us not part ill friends,' and she stretched out her hand. He vehemently kissed it, and went out.

'Come hither, child, you have a message for me?' said she to Annette, who had stood a witness of the discussion, unknowing whether to speak or retire. The kindness of the lady's manner reassured her.

'It is a letter from Madame la Supérieure to Madame la Marquise.'

'Ah, good Sœur Victoire, she has been so kind in her help to my poor attempt at an ambulance here. You are one of the nurses at the Convent hospital?'

'Yes, Madame la Marquise.'

'Some further instructions she sends me. She will soon make me as expert as herself. But I cannot read her letter, child. My poor eyes have for a long time been very dull, and lately—oh, lately, petite—why should I be ashamed to say it?—they have grown dimmer with weeping. Ah, little one, is there anybody you love at the war?'

Annette could not forbear a blush, but she answered frankly, 'My betrothed, Madame la Marquise.'

'God send him safe, child. I—I,' and here a passionate sob, she tried vainly to suppress, interrupted her—'I, lonely woman that I am, have my husband and son in the midst of the terrible conflict. But come, come, child, this will not do. We must forget ourselves in our task. Come, let us hear what good Sœur Victoire has to say. You will read it for me, n'est ce pas?'

'Certainly, Madame.'

And Annette opened the letter. As she glanced a little before proceeding, something like a cry escaped her lips. The Marquise suddenly caught her hand and looked eagerly into her eyes. 'What is it? Who is?—tell me. It is not bad news. Oh, God, have mercy on me! Read, child, read, I say,' and with a groan she sank upon her knees, with her head upon a chair. 'In one word,' she cried, lifting her head again, 'tell me what it is—my husband—my son—which?'

Annette's voice trembled. 'Madame, I have hardly read, but I fear it is—I fear it is—your son.'

'What—wounded—dead—ah!' she cried, with something like a gleam of joy—'a prisoner?'

Annette could not repress a sob. 'Madame, he is dead.'

A shriek, wild and piercing, rang through the apartment, and the mother sank down on the chair before which she was kneeling, while a shudder passed through her limbs. 'Oh, merciful God,' she gasped, 'why dost thou not take me away too?'

## CHAPTER XII.

## A LETTER.

THE unaccustomed cry of the Marquise had brought a number of servants to the door of the salon where she sat. The disturbance caused by their entry recalled her from the abandonment of her grief, and she rose, wringing her hands and with a wild excitement that seemed unnatural in her sweet countenance. Turning to Annette, she said with a weary accent, 'Read for me, read all that fatal letter.'

A grey-headed old man stepped forward from the group of servants, and said in a tone of respectful but affectionate inquiry, 'There is something the matter with Madame la Marquise?'

'Oh,' she sobbed, 'something the matter with me? You may stay, Charles, and hear that terrible letter, and then you will know there is indeed something the matter with me. God have pity on me, bereaved mother.'

'Bereaved, madame!' said the old man with a start, while the women behind him raised a cry.

'Hush,' said the Marquise, 'I want to hear. Read, child.'


Annette felt her frame quivering with emotion, as she proceeded to read aloud the paper she held in her hand.

‘My dear friend,

‘When thou openest this letter remember that affliction like all good comes from God. Be prepared to lay thy burden on Him. And, oh, Angèle, while I tell thee this that thou art bound to remember, my heart bleeds for thee. It is the saddest task of my life to have to inflict a terrible stab upon my cherished old friend and school companion. Thy son—thy brave, noble, generous son—the flower of the old nobility—the young man who kept the stainless soul of the Crusader in this debauched nineteenth century, has fallen on the field of battle, fighting in defence of his country.

‘Thou wilt, perhaps, wonder how I came first to have this sad intelligence to give thee. I have learned it from some of the wounded brought hither from the fight at St Denis. There can, alas, be no doubt as to the truth. Several of them saw him fall, pierced by a dozen Prussian bayonets. As might have been expected from his chivalrous nature, he was in advance of all his comrades, and alone against a host.

‘I much fear that the Marquis is in ignorance of this awful calamity. The night before the combat at St Denis he had gone down with the battalion to Nogent, but I am glad to believe that he is well.





‘How shall I express my sympathy for thee in this hour of trial? Alas, what would avail, indeed, my compassion, or that of any other mortal, even if I could pour it out in eloquent and persuasive words.

‘I know thee well, Angèle, I know that thou dost not need, in the supreme hour, to be taught whither to turn for solace. All, therefore, that remains for me is to pray. I will pray for him who is, I hope, gathered into the fold of his heavenly Father, and I will pray for thee and for thy noble husband. I will pray that this blow may fall as lightly as possible upon your afflicted hearts.

‘Much sorrow have I seen and known in this terrible war, but no event of it has struck me so deeply as this.

‘If I did not know thy goodness so well, I would ask you not to hate me as the messenger of evil news, but then, I know, thou couldst not hate even a conscious enemy, much less thy deeply sorrowing friend,

‘SEUR VICTOIRE.’

It was with a broken voice that Annette accomplished the perusal of the letter. The Marquise did not interrupt her save by the recurring exclamation of ‘my son, my son,’ as she sat with bowed head, and weeping piteous tears from the large, dim eyes. The servants were deeply af-


fected. The women sobbed hysterically, while the old man went over to where his mistress sat, and, reverently bending on one knee, took her hand and kissed it.

‘Charles,’ said the Marquise, ‘you all loved him. You all loved my dear son, is it not so?’

The sobbing of the women broke out afresh, while the old man with passionate tears exclaimed, ‘Oh, madame, who would not love the brave, gentle, handsome viscount? France has lost much, madame, my honoured mistress, but she has lost nothing more precious than that gallant life.’

‘Ah, Charles,’ replied the Marquise, ‘every one loved him. I do believe it,’ she added with a wild air, ‘that God himself loved him too well to leave him in this miserable France!’ Then with a faint flush, as if of shame, on her pale cheek, she said hurriedly, ‘leave me, Charles—go! good Marie and Jeanette.’

The man bowed lowly, the women still in tears made respectful courtesies, and they withdrew. The moment they had disappeared the Marquise flung herself upon her knees, and by the broken exclamations which burst from her lips, Annette plainly perceived that she was engaged in the passionate prayer of one struggling between an overpowering grief and the duty of resignation. Annette felt herself in a position of some embarrassment. She thought she should have withdrawn



with the servants, but the nun who had given her the message bade her wait and see if she could be useful. She wondered now what the object of such a mandate was, but was still more absorbed in the contemplation of the sorrow which was manifested before her. To her peasant's respect for rank, which, though by no means servile, was considerable, there was added the pain of feeling that she might be obtruding upon emotions which would naturally seek privacy. While in this conflict of feeling she stood embarrassed, she became aware that the exclamations of the Marquise became fewer, that longer intervals passed between the heavy sobs that seemed to shake the kneeling figure. Suddenly all sounds ceased, Annette stepped lightly across and went to her. The Marquise had fainted. Without a moment's hesitation Annette raised gently in her strong arms the slender form of the Marquise and bore her to a sofa ; then rang the bell for assistance. She had not long to wait, for the apprehensive servants were on the *qui vive*, and they trooped into the room in nervous trepidation. In the circumstances, however, Annette felt perfectly at home. She had rapidly acquired skill in dealing with bodily ailments, and her directions were given with an authority, which, enforced by the uniform that showed her attached to a hospital, caused deference and prompt execution.

The syncope of the Marquise was long and

severe. At one time it degenerated into a mere struggle between life and death. A feather on the lips failed to quiver, and the quick ear of Annette only was able to detect the light fluttering of the heart. After what seemed to the anxious watchers a period of hours, but was not in reality very many minutes, the pulse gave feeble beats, and then, though still weak, became more reassuring. Annette had at the first alarm sent to inquire if there were a medical man in the ambulance, but it happened that there was none in-doors. She had, therefore, to take upon herself the whole responsibility of the patient, and felt in no slight degree relieved when she found that her simple skill was likely to be rewarded with success. Before long the Marquise had sufficiently recovered to be brought to her own apartment, in lifting her to which the strong and gentle hands of Annette were of no small aid.

The insensibility of the patient had now changed into an intermittent torpor, in the intervals of which she was delirious. Annette, who watched by her bedside, herself a picture of healthful beauty, was lost in admiration of the delicate grace that marked the lineaments of the elderly woman who lay before her. Aristocrat seemed to be marked in every line of her pale face, and even in the movements of the small hands, which fluttered uneasily above the coverlet. Aristocrat! ay, in everything but suffering, and 'there,' thought

the watcher, 'she has no advantage over the coarsest mother of a conscript, who learns by the *Gazette* that her son is amongst the slain.'

Through the long night she sat ministering such palliatives as were needed. It was some time after midnight that a doctor came, and examined the patient. He was weary and overworked, and was returning to the ambulance below stairs after a few hours' sleep, when he was informed of the need of his services. It was not long, poor man, since his heart would have bounded with joy at the idea of being summoned to the bedside of even a domestic of the Hotel Villecourt; now, patients were only patients, even those of the highest rank being of doubtful capacity to pay. It was, therefore, with an air of perfect professional indifference he approached the bedside of the Marquise, and, after a brief examination, approved Annette's treatment, and departed.

In the silent watches of the night the low voice of the patient sometimes rose in tone, and Annette could catch whole phrases. She spoke of the Marquis, and of a certain story by the seashore, and her delight in boating. There were references to a little blue-eyed girl in pink shoes, and to a brave boy, named Hippolyte, with brown eyes, and broad shoulders, but of the recently-slain son not a word.

During the long hours more than one of the maid-servants appeared to relieve Annette of her vigil,

but she refused. She now quite understood the object of the nun in making her the bearer of the ill news, and she was anxious to discharge the duty to the utmost of her capacity. And so she sat through the chill December night, and saw the slow growth of the light in the drear December morning.

The forenoon was well advanced when Annette suddenly perceived that the patient was awake, with her eyes curiously fixed upon her. The wildness had now passed from them, and their natural sadness seemed a thousand-fold increased. Annette at once perceived that consciousness had come back.

‘You are the girl,’ said the patient, ‘who brought me the terrible letter?’

‘I am, alas, madame.’

‘And I have been ill?—insensible?’

‘Yes, madame fainted!’

‘And you watched over me?’

‘I did my best, Madame la Marquise.’

‘Was I very ill?’

‘Well,’ said Annette hesitatingly, ‘at one time I felt afraid madame would have never recovered.’

‘And you helped to bring me back to life?’

‘I did what I could, madame.’

‘Ah, child,’ she said, with a heavy sigh, ‘you meant well, but you would have been my best friend if you had stamped out the last breath from this poor weak body. But, oh, God of

Heaven,' she suddenly cried, as an expression of terror passed over her face, 'what wicked words am I saying? Petite, kneel—kneel, child, and pray with me. Help me to struggle against the promptings of a wicked heart.'

Annette knelt by the bedside, and put up her simple, heartfelt prayers, the responses to which were uttered by the sick lady, whose excitement seemed to calm down under their benign influence.

After she had concluded, Annette said, gently, 'If madame had died, would there be any one authorized to direct the ambulance attached to the Hotel?'

The Marquise looked at her fixedly, and a slight flush rose into her cheek.

'No,' said she thoughtfully, 'I am afraid there would not.'

'That,' said Annette, quietly, 'is something to live for, madame. Many a poor soldier's blessing, many a wife's tears of joy, many a mother's prayer will go up to Heaven to ask for consolation for madame, so long as that ambulance is doing its blessed task.'

'Come and kiss me, child,' said the old lady, and tears, this time not violent but copious, flowed from the large, dim-sighted eyes.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE FIRST SHELL.

**D**ESPITE the good resolution of the Marquise to think more of her duty than of her grief, it was but slowly she gathered strength. Days passed during which it seemed as if the flickering life, which knew so much misery, would disappear altogether. For the greater part of this time Annette was in close attendance upon her.

‘I do not know, child,’ she used to say, gazing long in her weary way, ‘why it is I prefer to have you near me to any one of my people about. If you had known my son I could comprehend it, for then it would seem as if there was some link which bound you to me.’

Annette, embarrassed, would answer, ‘It is, indeed, unaccountable, madame, but I am thankful for madame’s kind inclination.’

‘Dear child, the gratitude should be all on my side. What have you to be grateful for? The opportunity of wearing yourself out in the service of a querulous, grieving old woman.’

‘Madame, I assure you, I feel no trouble. I



feel nothing but gratification at being privileged to attend you.'

'Ah, petite,' exclaimed the Marquise, 'I now know why it is my heart yearns to have you in preference to those whom I have known longer. I am the poor animal robbed of its young—you are the stray lambkin, kitten—what you will—that must fill the void in the mother's bosom. Come and embrace me, child.'

Such overtures were not gratifying to Annette. She regarded the Marquise with a good deal of respectful affection, but she was not able to respond to the ardent affection the noble lady testified to her. Once the Marquise hinted at adoption. Annette disposed of the suggestions gently but firmly.

'Madame la Marquise,' she said, 'you honour me too much—but it is impossible. By-and-by, when all this terrible war is over, and the sort of equality that misery makes is forgotten, you will be again the great lady in the centre of a society of high people; you could not introduce there as your adopted daughter a plain, peasant girl.'

'Ah,' sighed the Marquise, 'the days to come!—alas for me, the "great lady."'

'Beside, Madame la Marquise,' continued Annette blushing, 'there is another reason, I am betrothed.'

The Marquise would have interrupted, but

Annette, in her gentle but steady way, went on. 'My fiancé is a noble-minded man, who, comparatively rich himself, chose me, a very poor girl. We were solemnly pledged with the consent of his father and mother, both of whom, alas, madame, have perished in the incidents of this cruel war. I feel myself almost as solemnly bound to him as if we had been married. He has fought bravely in the service of his country, but now languishes in a German prison. One of the chief motives of my going into the ambulance was to help him should he be wounded—and it actually was, by the goodness of God, my fortune to have dressed a wound of his, received,' said Annette, with a slight taint of bitterness, 'not from the common foe, but from his own countrymen. If I were to prove ungrateful to my vow towards him for the sake of any worldly elevation, I should be a contemptible creature indeed.'

'But you might marry him. My husband, perhaps, could get him made an officer,' interrupted the Marquise eagerly.

Annette shook her head. 'Madame la Marquise, remember that he and I are both peasants. He as a soldier, and I, as a nurse, are in our places; but he and I would be a very awkward couple in the middle of a salon. I do not believe there is a handsomer, or braver, or better man in France than my Michel, but I know, too,

madame, that he would be out of place dressed up in the 'clothes in which gentlemen go to court, or in attempting manners at a ball.'

The Marquise moaned, 'I do not wonder, child,' she said weakly, 'that wealth and station do not tempt you. I have had them all my life, and my life has been one of sorrow only. My father's house was a gloomy prison. He was ambitious, but he was faithful to his legitimist convictions, and, as he would not mix in public affairs, he gnawed his heart in bitterness, and all around him had perforce to share his gloom. My husband's life has been made the prey of incessant anxiety by dreams of impossibilities sought to be turned into action. One by one my three children have been taken from me—my dear soft baby—my sweet darling whose grave I had to cover with flowers before he had reached a twelvemonth. In that drawer there you will see a pair of little pink shoes—ah,'—here sobs choked the utterance of the poor lady. In broken accents she went on to tell of her broad-shouldered boy with the soft, manly, brown eyes, who had been drowned while swimming in the cruel sea, and then she broke down altogether as she came to the mention of the last calamity. 'Oh, my Fernande was the joy of my soul, and yet a trouble deep and sad to me. Why? you will ask. He was too thoughtful. My mind was ever busy trying to fathom the depths of his.

The gaieties of young men had no charm for him, and yet he was not gloomy. No maiden ever attracted him; he used to kiss my hand, and say, his beautiful mother—ah, Heavens! how vain even the oldest of us are—was sufficient object of love to him. He had the legitimist sentiment of his family deep in his breast, but he never mingled or seemed to concern himself in politics. When the war broke out it irritated him. He blamed it as the outburst of a mad ambition. But when the Germans besieged Paris he came to me one day, and said, “Mother, there are no politics now, every Frenchman must defend his country.” Alas, what could I say? Though I knew—oh! how well I knew—what was to happen, could I turn a son of the Crusaders from the path of duty and honour? My boy, my beautiful, my brave, went from me—and ‘oh,’ she added, wildly, ‘when shall I go to him?’ With a little more calmness she shortly after said, ‘I used to notice in his room a volume which he read repeatedly and with intense interest—it was the Life of St Francis Xavier. Could it have been,’ murmured she thoughtfully, ‘that he thought of enterprises far away amongst the heathen like him?’

In such conversations a close intimacy and affection had grown up between Annette and the Marquise. But Annette occasionally left her noble patient to seek another part of the house.

‘I cannot help it, madame,’ she used to say apologetically. ‘It seems to me as if I am doing a sort of duty by my betrothed whom I am aiding one of his gallant comrades.’

‘Well, Miss Annette,’ said one of the patients who was suffering from a broken leg, ‘it’s a great assassination that you can’t write English.’

‘I could write in French, and perhaps some of your neighbours in Ireland would understand it.’

‘Think of that now. Well, women beat the world for cleverness. To be sure, there’s Father O’Shaughnessy, and I often heard people say he knew the seven languages, and that French was like print to him.’

‘Shall I write then to the Père O’Shaughnessy?’

Mike—for it is hardly necessary to say the distinguished patient was he—considered for a while, ‘If they get a letter from me in French, I suppose they’ll think I’ve forgotten all my English.’

‘I can explain,’ said Annette with a smile, ‘that you are too ill to write, and that I can only write for you in French.’

‘But I wonder what would Lizzie Connell think of my having a letter written by a beautiful young woman?’

Annette laughed. ‘She will not know by my writing that I am young. I am only a hospital nurse you know.’

‘Very well, then, begin.’

‘What shall I say?’

‘Say; sure how can I tell—me with a broken leg?’

‘But that need not hinder you from telling me what you want your friends to know.’

‘That’s true. Well, tell Lizzie Connell, that there isn’t a vein in my body that isn’t in love with her.’

‘Don’t you think that would be a strange thing to write to the Père O’Shaughnessy?’

‘Oh, God forgive me,’ said Mike, ‘one would think it was my head was broke instead of my leg. What would you say, Miss Annette?’

‘You might tell that you were in the great battle.’

‘Oh, exactly.’

‘And that you and a brave comrade were amongst the foremost of the French forces.’

‘Miss Annette, say what you like about my comrade. He deserves it, for in prison or out of it, his equal isn’t to be found. But as my exploits consisted principally of getting a damaged leg, by one of our own bullets, it might look as if I were ungrateful to the French to put it down.’

‘Well then, what shall I say?’

‘Let me see,’ said Mike thoughtfully. ‘It was a great battle. There was very hot work, and that was the only thing hot about it, for it was awful cold weather.’

'That is written down.'

'Then there were a great many of us put out of the cold altogether, but in a way some people mightn't like.'

'What next?'

'And there were such a lot with their legs shot off, that to get a leg merely broken so that it might be repaired again was a wonderful piece of luck.'

'And then?'

'And then to be wounded was a very bad thing for most, because many of them lay down to die without a bit or a sup, or help of any kind.'

'That is done.'

'But that wasn't the luck of one Mike Mahony.'

'Eh?'

'Because, you see, owing to his touch in the leg here he is cocked up in a grand palace with a beautiful young woman acting as his secretary.'

'We shall leave out about the secretary,' said Annette.

'And now I'd like to ask,' said Mike considering, 'how the potato crop turned out. It's always a tender point in Ireland.'

'Very well.'

'And how the father and mother are getting on.'

'I have written that.'

‘And it wouldn’t be improper, would it, to ask if Lizzie Connell is married yet?’

‘No, I think not.’

‘And whether she ever thinks of a crack-brained fellow who lately got shot in the great sortie?’

‘I dare say the Père would not object. I have put it down.’

‘Well, we ought not to end the letter without a word for all inquiring friends.’

‘Very good.’

‘And they’ll be glad to hear,’ added Mike with a burst—‘that a distinguished but a distant relation of the family——’

‘Who?’ asked Annette in surprise.

‘The Marshal,’ said Mike proudly.

‘What of him? Which Marshal?’

As she spoke a sound like thunder shook the air. There was a crash and a rumbling in the roof, and presently a shower of bricks was seen through the window opposite the bed falling into the court-yard. For a moment there was a general pause. Then a voice was heard to say, ‘The bombardment has begun.’



## CHAPTER XIV.

## DARK TIMES.

THE time of Annette was divided between attendance on the soldiers in the ambulance and on the sorrowing mistress of the house which had been given over to it. Though sad thoughts often filled the breast of the girl, and though her daily occupations were not of a nature to raise her spirits, she resisted the gloomy tendency that seemed to be in the very air she breathed. A few days after the death of the viscount, his father had come from his post to pay a flying visit to his wife. Annette was not present at the interview and caught little more than a glimpse of the Marquis. He was in uniform. He appeared hardly as old as his wife, and his form was erect and vigorous. But there was on his face a look of sombre despair which startled Annette as she beheld it.

When she went to visit the Marquise after her husband had departed, she found her with her face buried in the pillows, and making no sound but low moans which seemed to escape her unconsciously from time to time. Annette laid her

hands softly upon the shoulder of the poor lady. She only shivered. Then, with the boldness of affection, the girl flung her arms round the wasted form, and kissing her warmly sought to bring her back to speech. After a while the Marquise raised her head, and looked vacantly at Annette. 'Oh,' she said, 'it is only misery on misery.'

'Monsieur the Marquis was awfully smitten by the shock?' said Annette inquiringly. 'It is better,' she thought to herself, 'to babble than to let her break her heart in this way.'

The Marquise flung her hands above her head and burst into a fit of passionate weeping. Before its energy had quite subsided she said to Annette, 'I want to get up—help me.'

'Alas, Madame is not strong. In a few days perhaps.'

'Talk not to me of days when there is a duty to be done. My boy's corpse lies in some frozen field, or put into some fosse without distinction. My husband—who never spoke harshly to me before—almost reproached me with it. Come, I will go and seek my boy.' And with a burst of feverish energy she strove to rise from the bed. 'Yes,' she continued wildly, 'it is right I should go to him. I know from my husband's manner that I shall never see him again. He said to me his last hope was to get a merciful bullet from the Prussians.' While speaking thus in a high, excited voice, her hands were busy

tying the strings of her cap, as if she were about immediately to rise. But the fitful energy declined almost as rapidly as it rose. The thin fingers soon began to play idly with the strings, the flush died out of the wan cheek, and she fell back on her pillow with a renewed pallor that alarmed Annette for her life. The feeble flame was again restored with much care, but so diminished in vitality that it was not hard to see its final extinction could not be long delayed.

The days wore on. The monotony was varied by terrors and by sights of misery. Darker grew the air by day, more miserable the nights. The laughing sky of Paris had changed to a wintry aspect which would have seemed forbidding even in the chilly north. It was as if the climate had suited its humour to the fortunes of the gay capital, and that all its summer smiles had disappeared in a winter of discontent. Outside men and women found an eager consolation in thinking that these rigours would make the siege of Paris a Moscow for the Germans. But these latter suffered comparatively little. They had fuel in abundance, shelter to a great extent in the villages, and, above all, they were adequately fed. Within the cold fell upon forms weakened by the insufficiency and unsuitability of food.

Annette went occasionally to visit the convent whence she had come to the Hotel Villecourt. Her passage through the streets rarely failed

to present her some sight of a saddening nature. One of the most terrible was at the bakers' shops where the people were waiting en queue for hours to be served with their pitiful allowance of bread. There was misery in every aspect, and at every age; emaciated children struggled for their places with old men and women; broken down gentility shouldered by squalor to which want presented no novelty.

'I have been here since six o'clock this morning,' she heard a woman with a pinched face say to another, 'and I suppose it will be hours before I get served.'

'My husband I suppose will be dead by the time I get back,' said another with an air of almost stolid indifference. 'Men somehow cannot bear starvation as well as women.'

'My rations are daily diminishing,' said a third. 'I have lost two children since this plan of doling out bread began.'

A burly-looking labourer, who shoved his neighbours about with little consideration, grumbled 'I wonder why we wait here. If I had half-a-dozen fellows with me we should sack that place, and distribute the bread a little more quickly than these messieurs within there.'

These were but part of the sounds Annette's ear caught as she made her way through the crowd. They were not altogether in this gloomy strain. The light-hearted Parisian had not en-

tirely changed his character, but there was no mistaking the effect wrought on the spirits of the people by the sameness and the prosaic nature of the misery they endured. The elements of a grander terror were not, indeed, wanting. The bombardment, from the first casual shots, which seemed as if they were merely trials of the range of the guns, had become continuous. The extent of the city prevented the possibility of anything like a general destruction, and the fall of a shell in any particular quarter seemed to the rest an object of curiosity, something like the outbreak of a fire in ordinary times. The gamins used to run about gathering up the pieces of the exploded shells, and found plenty of persons to buy them at prices varying from a sou to a five-franc piece. But soon they became so thick and frequent that the characteristic of novelty was lost sight of, and the danger became too real and tangible to be despised. It was certainly not carried on to such an extent as to threaten the destruction of the city. The object of the Germans was not to set the capital in ashes, but to weaken resistance by inspiring dread in the inhabitants. In this it completely failed, but there is no doubt that the bombardment came in the end to be looked on as an affair far more serious than it was regarded at first.

Annette was a strong, courageous girl, but the blood seemed to rush back to her heart as passing

through a wide street she saw high above her head a terrible dark object rush screaming through the air. It tore through the roof of a house beside her, sending up a cloud of dust and smoke, with bright flame between, while a shower of fragments fell all around. A piece of iron three or four pounds weight buried itself in the roadway close to her, while on the other side a tile from the roof threatened her with a grave peril. Wild screaming filled Annette's ears. At her feet were immediately half-a-dozen ragged lads plunging and struggling to get at the piece of iron which she regarded with such affright.

With a shout of triumph the biggest of the lot bore off the prize, which he waved above his head. 'A grand specimen,' he exclaimed in his shrill voice, 'worth two francs.' The beaten competitors looked on with envious faces, while one of them remarked sadly, 'It is too bad Voget should have got that, and there hasn't been a shell fired into this street for a week.'

'Never mind,' was the consolatory reply from a sympathetic companion, 'the bombardment they say is to get heavier every day, and then we shall have plenty.'

'Yes, but if they become so abundant nobody will buy them.'

'Ah, that's true.'

Meantime amid the noise and confusion Annette's ear detected a series of shrieks ringing

loud and clear from the upper portion of the house. It was a poor quarter; the dwellings were not very inviting; she knew little or nothing of the neighbourhood, and she had the natural caution of a peasant. But her heart bounded with pity, and after a moment's hesitation she entered the open door and rushed up the stairs. Many others were likewise ascending in eager haste; Annette followed them. Arrived at the highest landing the door of a large attic was pushed in by one of the people. With the darkness of the staircase the lightsomeness of the room presented an unexpected contrast; it was because a great part of the roof had been torn away, while the rafters were on fire, though as yet the blaze had not grown to any serious extent. Right in the middle of the floor lay the body of a woman face downwards, and quite dead. From a wound in the head there flowed a copious stream of blood. Beneath her dress could be seen the feet of an infant peeping out; but no sound came from the child. In a second it flashed across Annette's mind that the little creature had been suffocated by the fall of the mother. There was one living thing, however, in the apartment. Crouched in a corner like a hunted animal, with gleaming eyes that seemed to blaze from the shock head of hair that fell over her forehead, was a girl of about eleven years. It was from her proceeded the screams that Annette had heard,

and she now repeated them in wild piercing tones, almost without intermission. Annette's first impulse was to raise the woman, but she found her past all care. She sought anxiously to ascertain if there might be life in the babe whose swollen face and relaxed limbs told the tale too painfully. But there was no hope. The tender shield of the mother's breast had unintentionally been the instrument of its destruction.

Some of the people, inhabitants of the house for the most part, turned their attention to the girl.

'What is your name?' asked one.

To this there was no answer. She paid no heed to the question, but screamed again and again with agonized violence.

'Does any one know who these people are?' asked somebody.

'I do not, though they have lived in the house some months. I fancy they are country people who came in here just before the siege.'

Said another, 'I have heard, but am not quite sure, that the husband of the poor woman here is a mobile.'

'What is to be done with the little one. She will become mad if she continues in this strain?'

Annette went to the child and tried to soothe her, but in vain. 'Is there anything to be done?' she asked earnestly of one of the women standing near.



The woman shrugged her shoulders. 'The municipality will bury the dead mother and child. As for the living'—she made a puzzled gesture—'it is hard to know who will maintain her when it is so hard to get food at all.'

'But she will die between terror and want if she be left thus.'

The woman again shrugged her shoulders. 'Perhaps mademoiselle would like to take charge of her. I am sure nobody will dispute the possession.'

'Unfortunately, I am only a hospital attendant—a nurse to the wounded, and could not bring her with me.'

'Well,' said the woman with a softening tone, 'mademoiselle has a good heart. I will try what I can do for her. Food is scarce. Very likely we shall all die of starvation. If this siege lasts a month longer we certainly will. A little sooner or a little later does not make much difference. I will take her in charge, and as long as I can maintain myself will maintain her.'

'God will bless you for your charity, madame. May I ask you your name?'

Again shrugging her shoulders with a cynical air, the good woman said 'Mordan.' And she added, 'It is not a matter to make a noise about. If the poor did not help the poor—if they depended only on the charity of the rich—why—God help them. The rich may mean well, but

they do not know where to use their money rightly.

‘Madame Mordan,’ said Annette, drawing the woman aside, ‘I am not of the rich, but I have a little money. It is not much, but it will aid your charitable task.’ And she drew a napoleon from her pocket.

The woman reddened, and hesitated, ‘There was a time, mademoiselle, when nothing would have induced me to accept your gift, but now,’ she added with an embarrassed laugh, ‘it is idle to be proud when we are fed worse than beggars used to be.’

‘Madame,’ said Annette, ‘you have no reason to be ashamed.’ And as she left the house, proceeding on her way, she said thoughtfully to herself, ‘Ah, there are still bright points in this gloomy siege.’

## CHAPTER XV.

## DARKER AND DARKER STILL.

DECEMBER had merged into January, but the new year had brought with it no beneficial change. The great Parisian festival day had passed almost without notice. Hunger and cold had all but killed the faculty of enjoyment. Annette continued to watch over the feeble health of the Marquise, who only heard at rare intervals from her husband, and who apparently derived but little comfort from his brief letters. Such consolation as Annette could give was administered, but it is difficult to cheer those who are at once bowed by mental affliction and bodily weakness.

Though her position was sad enough she bore herself cheerfully in it, and strengthened her heart by frequent recourse to prayer. But even here as it seemed to her the terror of the enemy pursued her. One gloomy afternoon as she passed from the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg through the Place St Sulpice she looked in at the open door. Half attracted by curiosity to see closer the splendid proportions of the interior, half moved by that desire which impels pious

souls to acts of devotion when the opportunity offers itself to them, Annette entered. There were but few in the church, mostly women. There prevailed that silence, which seems to belong peculiarly to churches, so intense that it may be felt. A few lights blazed on the Virgin's altar, and there were one or two kneeling figures in front of the rails. Annette drew near, bent her head reverently, and put up a petition for the safety and happiness of those who were dear to her. Suddenly there was a roar, and a blinding glare, a crash and confusion that seemed to take away her senses. She sprang from her knees. The altar before her was levelled, the candlesticks and ornaments were overthrown and demolished, the hangings in flames. The church hitherto so silent was filled with the clamorous outcry of terror. Some seconds passed before Annette fully realized the situation. A shell had struck the altar. She glanced aside. Her next neighbour lay prostrate upon the ground. 'She has swooned from fright,' Annette thought to herself, and she stooped to raise the woman. But she found blood oozing from her breast; she had been struck by a fragment of the shell. A priest rushed hastily from the sacristy, and gave some directions for the suppression of the flame which had attacked the drapery, and then went to the aid of the fallen woman. 'She is not dead,' he

said after a short examination, 'but her condition is dangerous; we must have her removed.' Aid was procured hastily, and the woman was borne away, the priest in close attendance upon her.

Annette moved sadly away, the impression made by the terrible scene and by her own narrow escape not being one easily got rid of. But her nature was strong and healthy, and she made an earnest effort to shake off the horror of the recollection. She had partially succeeded when her attention was attracted by a crowd round a house, in the street through which she was passing. It was a large plain building, with several windows in the front, and over the centre gable a cross; she had no difficulty in distinguishing it as a school. One of the windows had been torn away, and a large portion of the wall with it. Annette quickly discerned the meaning of this now too familiar appearance. From the crowd there arose a loud continuous noise as if of persons speaking in angry excitement, high above which rose every now and then a piercing shriek. As Annette came near the crowd opened, and two men emerged from it. They bore between them a flat board, and on it reposed the corpse of a child of about eight years of age. There was blood upon the clothes, and the dark hair which fell in short curls over its forehead was stained and matted with gore.

Beside the little corpse, holding one of the small hands, raising it now and then with loud piteous cries to her lips, walked a young woman. 'My child, my child, my only darling,' were all the intelligible words Annette could gather, but they told of as much sorrow as a volume could.

'What is the matter, mademoiselle asks?' said a surly-looking man, 'It is not difficult to guess what is the matter. We are not starving fast enough for messieurs the Prussians, but they want to cut us off root and branch. They must kill our very children.'

'Was there more than that little fellow slain?'

'More! Why he's the fourth corpse I've seen go out here, and they've got the doctor above there with a lot of the wounded, I'm told.'

'I've heard there were a dozen killed there,' said an old woman with that sort of delight in the exaggeration of the horrible common in her class.

'It is nothing to what happened at the Pélagie,' said another, 'where twelve National Guards were slaughtered by the bursting of a single ball.'

'There were not twelve,' said a quiet-looking man.

'There were,' rather angrily returned the woman. 'I had it from a person who saw the bodies.'

'I saw the bodies myself and counted them. There were two men killed outright, and four badly wounded. I saw the men being taken to hospital.'

Annette did not wait to hear the conclusion of the discussion, or the remainder of the tales of destruction which were evidently on the lips of the crowd. Accustomed as she had become to scenes of suffering, the sight of the dead child's face had produced in her mind a sickening sensation. While she walked it seemed impossible for her to get rid of the presence of the bombardment and of its cruelties. Over her head a dozen times she heard the wild whistle of the dread missile, and once or twice she knew by the sound of falling materials that it had struck somewhere not far from her. Her eyes were caught by a placard on the wall. It was a proclamation from the Government of National Defence recommending the inhabitants to walk on the southern or eastern side of the streets as being more sheltered from projectiles, and requesting concierges to leave their gates open so that citizens may take refuge directly they heard the whistle of the enemy.

Night had fallen by the time of her arrival at the Hotel Villecourt. As she rang at the gate a funeral passed. Contrary to the custom of Paris in its brighter times the attendance was scanty.

The concierge put his head out of his lodge,

and saluted Annette. He was a lean, withered old man.

‘Does mademoiselle take an interest in the obsequies of the dead?’ he asked.

‘Only in the case where I have known the dead.’

‘Impossible! Not in seeing a great cortège, with priests, and mourners, and little children with rare flowers to spread over the tomb?’

‘I cannot say I think it very attractive. It seems to me gloomy.’

‘Mademoiselle, I do not think I know anything so picturesque or so cheering. Certainly there was nothing I enjoyed so much as the funerals that used to pass my gate here.’

Annette could not repress a shudder, and almost began to look upon the little old man as if he were something evil.

‘But now, alas, all my enjoyment has departed.’

‘How, monsieur? I should have thought there would be a great deal of mortality at present.’

‘But that is just it.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Why, it is plain. The undertakers are so much occupied they cannot pay attention to details, and there is no elegance in the arrangements. Funerals are so numerous that friends cannot attend them. The number of people to be buried is so great that the undertakers per-



form a large part of the funerals at night. A friend of mine who is in the profession has assured me that at Père la Chaise they work all night long.'

'What horror!' said Annette. 'Oh that this cruel siege was over.'

'Would it were, mademoiselle,' responded the porter; 'until it is I do not expect to look upon a funeral with any sense of gratification whatever.'

Annette hastily bade him good evening, and hurried into the house. Before returning to her attendance on the Marquise she went to pay a visit to the ambulance, where she was in the habit of giving such assistance as she could in the intervals of her task. Here was not much to raise spirits depressed by appearance out of doors. New accessions to the number of wounded came in twos and threes, some struck in outpost affairs, others hit by shells in the forts or in the streets. At the very entrance door through which she passed there lay the corpse of a soldier who had just died. As yet the bearers had not come to remove him. At the farther end of the ward, a soldier was seated on the side of his pallet with his head down, evidently in deep occupation on some object he held in his hands.

'Good evening, Monsieur Mike,' said she.

'Oh, Miss Annette,' he replied looking up. 'I'm much better, thanks be to God, and to the good people here, your pretty self included.'

‘You do not feel much pain in your leg?’

‘Why then, no—not exactly.’

‘Not exactly?’

‘Well, you see, if I was to say where the pain was precisely, I think I would say in the bandage.’

Annette smiled, ‘You have recovered very rapidly.’

‘I suppose I did, but after all, Miss, between five and six weeks doesn’t go so quickly on the flat of one’s back here.’

‘Ah, be assured I fully sympathize with the tediousness of your case, but I mean, considering the nature of the hurt, it is not long.’

‘To be sure it isn’t, and I’m certainly hard to please when I’d grumble about it. But in truth, Miss Annette, I’m put out of humour.’

‘Indeed? has anything been done to annoy you?’ asked Annette hastily.

‘O yeh, not intentionally. The people here mean well. The old doctor is a little rough, but he handles limbs cleverly, I must say for him. The young man, indeed, did look in a very greedy way at my leg, and a little saw he had, but the old chap wouldn’t let him. I let them fight it out,’ added Mike with a laugh, ‘but I knew how it would end.’

‘You knew how it would end?’

‘Oh, to be sure. I said nothing, but I had a hand on that three-legged stool there, and if he

had put that saw to my shin I'd have brained him.'

Annette gave a start.

'Never mind, Miss Annette, that wasn't what I wanted to talk about, but to tell you what put me down in heart and made me cross.'

'What was it?'

'Why then just this,' and he brought forward a crutch which he had laid beside him against the bed when Annette spoke.

'But it is only a crutch, and you will not have to use it for long.'

'And when I'm done with it the siege will be over.'

'I trust in Heaven it may be,' said Annette, with a vivid recollection of what she had seen through the day.

'Ah, Miss Annette, just look at the shank of it. It reminds me of the chassepot. It calls back to me the days when my brave friend and I stood together, and it tells me that while outside the walls men are fighting stoutly against them infernal Prussians, and for France, I am here a useless cripple.'

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE HOTEL DE VILLE.

DESPITE the strong objection he entertained to his timber assistant, Mike Mahony was not long before he brought it into requisition. While still regarded as a patient of the ambulance he contrived to get into the streets and observe with much curiosity what was going forward. It did not always happen that what he observed was of a very striking nature. There is a good deal that is common-place even in times of siege in a great city. The bombardment interested him in some degree, but he had been under fire so often that it presented no great feature of novelty. He did, indeed, wonder at the indifference which began to be exhibited towards it by men, women, and even children, though at the time it was known that as many as fifty persons daily were slain by the shells or the fall of the materials of buildings.

As he rested one day on a bench placed outside a house, that once seemed to have been a sort of café, but was now closed, several men holding muskets in their hands passed him. They all were moving in one direction, and seemed to have a

common destination. Most of them cast a careless glance at the figure of the soldier in a faded uniform, with a crutch, and passed on. One, however, who was declaiming energetically to two or three, suddenly paused before Mike, and, addressing his companions, said 'Look here.'

They stopped and looked. Mike observed with interest. The speaker was a man in shabby clothes, meagre and under-sized, with hair closely cropped, and an eye which, under thick black eyebrows, seemed to blaze with animation. He stood sideways before Mike and raised his arm to point him out, as if he were a lecturer expounding from a black board.

'You see this?' he said.

His friends saw it.

'Well, this is the symbol of the curse that is weighing us down.'

The friends' countenances were turned into notes of interrogation, while Mike was deeply interested in this account of himself.

'Mark the military uniform.'

'Good.'

'See how it is faded—colour washed out—rotten in texture.'

'Bedad, monsieur,'—struck in Mike, but his attempt at interruption was vain. The torrent of the other's eloquence overwhelmed him. 'Behold,' he cried, 'the vile military system which when fresh and new dazzled the eyes of this fool-

ish nation, until they were blinded by the Man of December, and here is this same military system all faded, ragged, and torn to pieces under the Man of Sedan.'

The friends' faces now were notes of admiration.

'The wound of this soldier—what does it signify?'

'May be,' struck in Mike, who did not quite like what he thought a certain disparagement, implied in the question, 'you would know better if you had a touch yourself.'

'It is France pierced in her weakest point.'

'My leg, by the hokey!' thought Mike to himself. 'Well, I did think I wasn't ever feeble in them instruments, any way.'

'Regard that crutch! There you see the miserable prop with which one effete administration seeks to sustain the fabric raised by its miserable predecessor.'

'Bravo,' exclaimed the friends.

'Away,' cried the speaker growing more and more fervid in his enthusiasm, 'away, I say, with the rags of military uniform; away with the weak limbs which are not covered with the greaves of sublime liberty; away with the wretched prop which still holds up a barrier to the advance of that glorious freedom which will sweep like the avalanche the forces of a despicable enemy, and pour the blessings of victory and peace over the cities and plains of immortal France.'

‘Why, then, the devil fly away wid you,’ was the disrespectful commentary Mike uttered to himself, as the orator and his friends left him. He watched them, and saw that they went up a large flight of steps and entered a building of considerable size, and that with the men were mingled a large proportion of women and children. He was too far distant to hear any observations, but his ear caught the sound of singing, and the notes of the Marseillaise were faintly borne on the breeze.

A young woman passing by, Mike asked her what that building was. The girl without being pretty had a pleasing face, but there was about it an air of unnatural determination.

‘Do you not know,’ she said, ‘the great Foudroyant Club? Ah,’ she added with a tone of contempt, ‘you are a soldier of the miserable army which has left us shut up here.’

‘Well, miss,’ said Mike good-humouredly, ‘while I was able I did my best to prevent it, but you see this article here is not much of a weapon to fight for the French with.’

She was a communist, inflamed with the heated rhetoric she had heard in the club, but she was a woman, too, and she could not help sighing out the exclamation, ‘pauvre soldat!’ as she hurried away to take her share in the council for the rescue of the country which was then being held at the Foudroyant.

‘What would be the use of my going in there?’ communed Mike with himself. ‘I’d like a speech very well agin the Government if I was at home in Cappagh or at Limberick, but what the dickens is the use of hearing them unforchinate omad-hawns talking about sieges and battles, and I suppose hardly one of them knows how to load a gun.’

A couple of hours later Mike found himself on the steps of the Hotel de Ville. The news had spread like wild-fire through the city that General Trochu had resigned, and his curiosity was eager to learn more of what was to come. Within the building he perceived that a considerable number of troops, chiefly mobiles, was stationed. Though there was no very cordial feeling between the different bodies of which the garrison was composed, Mike’s uniform and condition enabled him quickly to scrape acquaintance with some of the men on duty. While they were speaking a confused noise arose, and some of the strains of the Marseillaise were heard.

‘Close the gates,’ shouted an officer in command.

The order was promptly obeyed.

Presently the noise and shouting became louder, and there appeared before the building about three or four hundred armed men, many of them in the uniform of the National Guard. At their head were two persons, one dressed like an officer,



the other in civilian costume. Mike watched the proceedings with intense interest, all the more because he thought he recognized the face of one of the leaders.

‘As sure as this crutch is undher my oxther,’ said Mike to himself, ‘that’s the little villyan that gev a lecture on me to-day as if I was a use o’ the globes or something of the sort.’

Mike was right. The orator of the morning was the leader in civilian costume. The rioters advanced boldly to the gates, but when they saw them firmly shut they wore a baffled and startled look. The officer of the National Guard said to his companion, ‘We must attack.’

‘Do you think it is necessary the Commissioner of the Republic should continue with you?’ asked Mike’s illustrator, a slight tremor in his voice.

‘Certainly,’ was the reply.

‘But I have profound confidence in your fidelity, captain,’ he returned.

At this moment a dozen mobiles appeared, and poked the muzzles of their chassépots out through the grating. Not another word of discussion took place between the captain and the commissioner. As if moved by the action of one soul in two bodies, they shrank away from the ugly protruding things, then, after the pause of a second, they simultaneously ran, the civilian, though the lighter, barely gaining a head on his companion. The remainder of the band looked

at each other foolishly. One at last said, 'I will follow my leader to the death,' and ran speedily after the captain and commissioner. Then the rest of the group broke up and trotted off, followed by peals of laughter from the mobiles within the Hotel de Ville.

'Pon my sowl,' remarked Mike to his trusted confidant himself, 'if all fighting was like the **fighting of that Club with the big name** I would not be under the necessity of hopping on **this blaggard crutch.**'

'What is this?' called out a soldier near him, 'more of them?'

This time from an opposite direction came a band, dirtier, noisier, and not so numerous as the first, but armed for the most part. They, too, were rather startled by the closed gates and the grim barrels of the chassepots. They halted and consulted. While they were in council about half the first batch came back with loud shouts of 'à bas les Bretons!' and 'Vive la Commune!' But as they joined with the others, there were those nasty chassepots still before them. From amidst the mass Mike observed a man step out in whom once again he recognized his oratorical acquaintance.

'Citizens of the Commune!' exclaimed this fiery patriot. 'To-day the work of the friends of liberty has been accomplished in the overthrow of the minion Trochu, the tool of the Man

of December. To-morrow, we shall make arrangements to march forth three hundred thousand men from the gates of the city, and annihilate the enemy that is without the walls. When we shall have done that, we shall deal with the enemy that is within the walls. Let your wisdom for a moment hold the rein of your fiery valour, so as to guide that proud steed to glorious and certain victory.'

There was not much shouting, but the orator's potency over his audience appeared to be undoubted, and they melted away.

'Aren't they done yet?' said Mike to himself, as a new band of about a hundred and fifty came with fierce cries. Amongst these there appeared to be no halting or indecision. Some of them dashed at the railing in a mad effort to tear it down by their hands. Others began firing at random shots which hit the building in different parts but without injury.

The commandant of the mobiles, accompanied by two officers, came to the gate, and asked what was the meaning of this?

A leader in the uniform of the National Guard stepped forward and said, 'Before I answer, say whether your troops have orders to fire upon the people?'

He had scarcely spoken when from behind him came an irregular discharge, and one of the officers within the railing fell dead.

‘Misguided men,’ said the colonel, ‘what are you doing?’

His answer was another discharge, which put his own life in peril.

‘There is no help for it,’ he said withdrawing, ‘fire, men!’ From the gate, and from the windows, which were crowded with troops, now came down a series of volleys. For a considerable time the rioters withstood the fire, but gradually they for the most part slunk away, and at the end of half-an-hour the warfare had ceased. About forty bodies lay upon the ground. Mike hobbled out when the battle was over to see the extent of the casualties. Many were killed outright, most lay helplessly wounded. Mike looked down upon the face of one man whose body lay behind a heap of sand, and whom he remembered as one of the loudest in the outcry. To his astonishment the corpse opened its eyes, and said to him, ‘Is the firing done?’

‘It is,’ said Mike.

‘Then I may depart,’ said he, as he rose up.

‘That was a snug little defence you got for yourself,’ said Mike.

‘I am a master of strategy,’ was the answer.

‘And you took good care of yourself, too,’ observed Mike.

‘My life is valuable to the Commune, to the country, and to humanity,’ he answered, as he stalked solemnly away.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE.

THE dreary month of February had given way to March when M. Victor Damarest rose betimes from his bed in a garret of the Rue Passy. M. Damarest had gone to rest without supper, and had shivered through the chill night with only a blanket on his pallet. Very few people wanted to buy the bottines which M. Damarest helped to make for the famous magasin in the Rue de Rivoli, money not being abundant enough to permit of general indulgence in such dainty articles, and the result was that the bootmaker had to put up with a very slender supply of the necessaries of life. Nevertheless, it appeared he was not without some of its luxuries, for as he sat on the side of his bed, drawing on the broken shoes which seemed, but unjustly, to depreciate his skill as a craftsman, he looked lovingly across the room, with the eye of a connoisseur feeding his vision on a rare work of art, and exclaimed, 'My treasure, I behold you still!' Carrying the eye in the direction indicated by the glance of M. Damarest

it would not strike one that the beloved object was such a gem after all. It was simply a musket, not even new, nor bright, but rather of clumsy make, the barrel being fastened with brass bands.

Having completed his toilet, which did not involve the appliance of water in any shape, M. Damarest hastened to the other corner of his garret and seized the musket, clasping it to his breast after the fashion in which the statues represent Joan of Arc with the two-handed sword. 'My beautiful, I have thee,' he exclaimed. 'My children are dead, my wife I have hunted from me, but thee—my foe of tyrants, my avenger of the people!—thee I still can press to my loving arms!'

It was rather awkward, but M. Damarest having caught the weapon above the lock had no very secure hold upon it, and at a slight relaxation of the pressure of his arms it slipped down, the butt arriving heavily on his toes. The incident produced a few oaths, and seemed to produce a new turn in his thoughts, for the ecstasy had given place to something like sadness.

'Ah, why,' he said, 'can I not handle thee like others? Why am I unskilled in the development of thy beautiful qualities? And, curse it,' he added, as his face darkened, 'why is it I shrink from the encounter where the ring of bullets makes music? Is it that I am of too intellectual

a nature?—that my soul is of too fine an organization? Curse it!—I am certain that thick-headed soldier with the crutch, whom I lately employed for a most felicitous illustration of my grand ideas, would stand quite unconcernedly while the bullets were flying around him. And I—oh, heaven—Stay, let me not, even in cursing, or swearing, or ejaculation, even in the privacy of my own chamber, descend to the recognition of that fable. Then let me say, Oh, hell—Psha! that is as absurd. No; let me swear by the spirit of humanity, the benign goddess—if we are to talk of deities—that when next thy beauty, my treasure, shines upon the world there shall be no failure in these nerves, and some one shall die as a sacrifice.'

Having laid his 'adored one' again in its corner, M. Damarest went to a small table which stood beneath the window of his garret, which, however, could only partially illuminate it. Groping over it with his hand, he alighted upon a minute crust of black bread, which he surveyed with a sigh. 'I fancied,' he said, 'it looked larger last night when I laid it by, deeming it better to do without supper than without breakfast. Allons, there will soon be bread enough.' And he despatched the morsel, washing it down with some water. Then, with a loving look at the musket, he took it up, placed it under the bed, and issued forth into the street.

From the narrow and confined quarter in which his abode was situated it was a long distance to the Elysées, but he made no delay and had arrived there at an hour that was still early. Though there was a double line of sentries, he, and many others for that matter, contrived to evade them. Looking up towards the Arc de Triomphe he could see that many were before him. He hastened on, and ere long had joined the group of a few hundred persons, who were scattered at both sides, stretching a good way down into the Bois de Boulogne. M. Damarest gazed about him, watching the spectators with eager, restless glance, when his quick eye lit upon a soldier who was on a seat, holding in his hand a large stick, on which he leaned forward a little.

‘You are the soldier that had the crutch?’ said he, coming forward and addressing Mike Mahony.

‘Yes, and you are the lecturer that had the impudence, I think,’ was the reply.

‘Behold, I have seen you but once and immediately I recognize you. Thus the sight of a traitor to the cause of the people impresses itself on the mind which is expanded by glorious ideas of liberty.’

‘Well, I have the advantage of you—if it is an advantage—for I have seen you twice.’

‘Ah, men of distinction, no doubt, are often seen when they are unconscious of it. But where?’



‘The first time when you pointed at my crutch, as if it were a badge of disgrace to be wounded in the cause of France.’

‘Justement. That was when I made you the illustration of my grand and original ideas on the subject of the army of the past and the Government of the present. And the second time?’

‘Well,’ said Mike slowly, ‘that was in a very conspicuous position indeed.’

‘Ha, no doubt,’ and a smile crossed the dark features of the lover of the musket. ‘It was?’

‘It was when I saw you pelting away from the Hotel de Ville at the head of your band of patriots. There’s no doubt you were first man among them, any way.’

M. Damarest grinned a very ugly grin indeed. His breath came short, and a spasm seemed almost to stop the action of his heart. ‘You have insulted me,’ he said, with a choking voice.

‘Don’t apologize in the least,’ said Mike, with an air of easy good-humour.

With clenched teeth and quivering with passion the man shook his fist in Mike’s face.

‘Observe, the day will come when—’

‘When you will get your courage back, I hope.’

‘When I shall wash out this insult in blood.’

‘You don’t seem to be given to washing in a general way, my friend,’ observed Mike imperturbably, ‘and you will, probably fail in that as in some other matters of laundry.’

A noise and rush of the crowd now became such as to put a stop to the dialogue. Mike, not being quite strong on his legs, clung to his seat, but his unpleasant acquaintance was borne away from him to some yards' distance. The uproar of the crowd, which was not very numerous, was as nothing to that which now came. It was like the roar of distant thunder in its swelling and occasional subsidence. It was the trampling of horses and men and guns, and the shouts from thirty thousand throats. Through the arch, in a few minutes, there were seen glancing the helmets of German cavalry. After a little came infantry, and then followed more horse soldiers, and a whole corps d'armée streamed through. On they came, brawny, big, bearded—the very pick of the whole German force, selected to impress to the utmost the idea of the physical proportions of the nation. They bore on them no traces of the hardships of war. Their uniforms were as fresh as if they had only been worn on occasional parade; their sleek, well-fed aspect formed a strange contrast with the pinched look which past hardship had set upon the faces of so large a proportion of the Parisians. The morning had been foggy, but now the sun shone out, and the glitter of the long line of helmets, the bristling bayonets, the flashing accoutrements, would have been a grand sight to indifferent eyes. After the avant-garde had passed through, the mounted

officer who rode at the head of the first column turned his eyes upward to the arch. There in huge letters he descried the inscription of victories which had often made the cheeks of his countrymen burn with shame. Now it was reversed. Rising in his saddle and half turning round, so as to be able to see those behind, he pointed with his sword to 'Jena,' and with the other hand taking off his helmet he waved it about his head, with a shout. The shout was immediately taken up, and rang down the line, and it could be heard rising and falling far away in the Bois de Boulogne. Each of the mounted officers as he passed through, followed, as if it were a sort of ceremony, the example of the first, and so the cheering was maintained unbroken for the two hours the march lasted.

Mike sat by during the whole proceeding, his heart swelling with grief and shame. 'Well,' he said to himself consolingly, 'they did bate us, there's no use in denying. But, afther all, I don't see there's much to hulloo about in winning a battle when all the odds are on your side.'

Buried in sombre reflections, in which his suggested consolation brought but small comfort, he leaned his head upon his stick. The swaying of the crowd around disturbed him, and once again he saw near him the bold Damarest. The face of the latter was fearfully inflamed; and his gleaming eyes appeared as if they would jump

from their sockets. He answered the German shouts with a kind of fierce yell, and brandished his hand as if to threaten the great host before him. His cries and his action, of course, passed unnoticed by those they were intended to menace.

‘My friend,’ said Mike, ‘they don’t seem much to mind you.’

‘Minion of tyrants,’ he cried, ‘it is such as I they would have had reason to fear if it were not for traitors like Napoleon and Trochu.’

‘Oh, you would have taken them as you did the Hotel de Ville,’ said Mike laughing.

Damarest, with eyes aflame, made a step towards the speaker, with his arm raised, but Mike, without stirring from his bench, raised up the stick he held in his hand, and putting it to his nose with a knowing air, asked, ‘Are you fond of ash saplings? They are said to improve the countenance wonderfully. Try this.’

With a scowl of intense malignity Damarest paused. Then he shrieked, ‘I have a sapling for you and such as you. I have a stem which will bring destruction to oppressors and their minions. They talk about disarming the patriots, do they? They shall not. When these are gone,’ and he pointed to the Germans, ‘our turn will come, and the rifles of the people will dispose of the oppressors who have betrayed and insulted us. Look to yourself, villain, who wear the livery of tyranny. We shall rid humanity of you and such as you.’

As he went on his voice rose higher and higher, but he kept edging steadily away from the range of Mike's cane. By the time he had reached the last words his voice had got into a howl, and then he disappeared.

'Wisha,' said Mike to himself, 'I wondher has hunger anything to do with that poor divil's spitefulness. Anyhow, he's an ugly kind of bird, and not unlike to do damage in the nest. It seems to me as if it was a toss-up between the likes of him and them Germans, which of them would be the worst for poor France.'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## RELEASE.

WE have for a time lost sight of Michel Voss, and under circumstances which were by no means gratifying for that brave soldier. His dungeon was the object of frequent visits the intention of which seemed to be malign rather than benevolent. Sometimes, indeed, they wore rather a friendly appearance, but Michel distrusted those more than he did the threatening attempts upon him. When the Thuringian sergeant with an air of bonhomie pitied his hard case, complained loudly how unfair it was thus to immure an ordinary prisoner of war, and offered to share a bottle of Stein wine with him, Michel calmly accepted the proffered drink but let fall no admission which might have had the effect of converting his warm-hearted friend into a witness against him at a drum-head court-martial. He smoked a cigar, but saw clearly enough that the donor hoped to smoke his secret from its concealment, and declined to let it be fumigated out. He even played a game of cards with a German sergeant, who thoughtfully lent him a few kreutzers to give an interest to the

affair, but though he lost the kreutzers, and ended by being two-pence three-farthings in debt to his entertainer, he won the game for all that, as he could not be betrayed into a word which might be tortured into identifying him with the dreadful Michel Voss. It was easier work to resist the efforts to terrify him into confession. To these he could oppose a calm which looked like stolidity, but meant simply courage and fortitude.

A fortnight had thus passed when one day a warder opened the door of his dungeon. 'Stolp,' he called. 'Here,' answered Michel promptly. The warder flung him a letter. The prisoner seized it eagerly and opened it. He found that Gros Jean was more acute than he had generally got credit for being, and comprehended the ruse of the feigned name. His intelligence was not altogether satisfactory, but it gave him news of his village friends, and above all of Annette. He had learned she was in attendance still at the ambulance at Paris, but letters from her had become very rare. A letter had been written to her to tell where Michel was in prison, but letters to Paris so often went astray that it was doubtful whether she ever received it.

One good effect of the letter Michel immediately found. It gave an apparent confirmation of the genuineness of his new name which the Prussians found it difficult to get over, and he was released from his dungeon. The good fellow who had

played cards with him and lent him coins was the sergeant of the escort that conducted him back to the barracks, but this time he did not seem to be in such a humour for good fellowship. On the contrary, he was rather morose, and insisted on Michel wearing handcuffs on the way, though there was no justification for such a course.

‘I do not believe a word of your verdammt Stolz,’ he said, casting a surly glance over his shoulder at his prisoner. ‘I do not trust you a bit.’

‘Why you have entrusted me with eleven kreutzers,’ said Michel with touching simplicity, ‘and why should you not trust me with such a trifle as my own name?’

‘You shall pay me those back some day, my good fellow.’

‘Excellent sergeant, I only wish I could pay them now. I would do so with pleasure but that your highly respected comrades did not leave me the means.’

‘Serve you right.’

‘Eh, well, perhaps so. A la guerre comme à la guerre? Très bien. But I hope I shall be able to pay you back, my friend,’ and here Michel looked steadily at the sergeant, ‘all that I owe you and your esteemed comrades.’

‘What do you mean?’ growled the sergeant.

‘I believe I speak German tolerably,’ answered Michel lightly, ‘but I am apt to run into French,



and so perhaps become unintelligible. Shall we have another game of cards when we get back to the barracks ?'

' Dress up there, keep that prisoner from talking,' roared the sergeant, and in a very ungenial humour the party returned to the huts.

On his arrival Michel was warmly and heartily greeted by his comrades. The effusion of the reception he met with inspired him with the first happy emotion he had experienced for a considerable time. He found that the admiration of his courage and address was united amongst his comrades with a strong affection. The natural gentleness of his disposition, the absence of braggadocio, and the sort of womanly tenderness he seemed to feel for a comrade in sickness or trouble, had their natural effect in securing for him the love of those about him.

- Nevertheless when his first feeling of gladness had passed by at the renewal of his comradeship, and the contrast of the comparative freedom he now felt with the horrors of his solitary confinement had lost its sharpness, the state of things in which he lived became painful enough. The treatment of the prisoners had not improved. Food, clothing, and fuel were all insufficient. Only one thing was secured for the prisoners in reasonable abundance, that was work. Some good Samaritans from abroad endeavoured to mitigate the rigours of the imprisonment by contributions

of food, of delicacies for the sick, and of warm clothing, but innumerable difficulties were placed in the way. When by chance any help was permitted it was only on the strict condition that no revelation should be made of the state of the prisoners, or any information published 'calculated to bring the German military system into discredit.'

Michel once ventured to speak of this matter to a soldier in whom he had found a kindly disposition.

'You see,' he replied, 'the number of prisoners is so large.'

'But surely the officers and others need not be so harsh.'

'Ah,' he said with a sigh, 'harshness is at the root of our whole military system. Men are looked upon as so many bodies to move, and so many brains to work, but hearts to feel do not come into the army estimates.'

The dreary days went on—Michel saw numbers of his countrymen around perish from mere hardship and privation. The prisoners were not altogether devoid of matter for reading. Their gaolers took care to supply them carefully from time to time with newspapers detailing, with more or less truth, the victories of the Germans in the last despairing struggles of the French. They were read in agonies of doubt and disbelief, but they did not tend, assuredly, to render the lives

of the captives more joyous. But the end came at last. One morning news reached of the armistice. It was received with very different feelings. Frenchmen had clung to the hope that some turn of fortune would arise for France, which might reverse the downward career of her arms, but the negotiation for peace in the actual state of things was a confession that this hope was vain. But then it promised the end of the weary captivity, and if their release could not make the men proud or glad, it certainly would be hard to say that it did not greatly soften in their eyes the severity of the blow to their country.

Michel's feelings, like those of the rest, were of a mixed character. He said to one of the officers who was talking the subject over with him, 'It is quite true, monsieur, I am glad to get back. If by my remaining in prison all my life—ay, in that hateful dungeon there—I could enable my country to carry on this war with honour, God knows I would readily stay. But as that cannot be, monsieur, and as I have dear ties awaiting me in Paris—if, indeed, I have'—he interrupted himself to say with a groan—'I am glad to quit this abode of misery.'

'And you do not regret your hospitable entertainers here?' said the officer with a laugh.

'No, monsieur, neither their society nor their treatment is agreeable to me.'

But the release was not quite so speedy as was hoped for. The dull days went on slowly enough, pending the negotiations for peace. The treaty was at last signed, but even then there was not the speedy homeward return for which impatient hearts beat. Michel, however, was now relieved entirely from anxiety for his own fate, and took rather a malicious pleasure in tormenting his late tormentors. The arrival of a little money from his brother Gros Jean placed him in easier circumstances than he had been, and enabled him to pay his gambling debt. When proceeding to discharge his obligation he made his toilet as elaborately as his shabby uniform would permit, and took care to place a little bit of red ribbon conspicuously on his tunic.

‘Here, my friend,’ said he to the sergeant, ‘are eleven kreutzers. You will not charge interest on a gambling debt?’

The sergeant growled but received the coins. He looked with an evil eye at his solvent debtor and his glance rested on the red sign.

‘What is that?’ he asked.

‘That?’ said Michel coolly, ‘is nothing—merely the legion of honour.’

‘Then you are that damned rascal Voss?’

‘Oh, poor fellow—a relative of his. I bewail him,’ said Michel, drawing out his handkerchief and wiping his eyes. ‘Thanks to your affectionate nature, friend,’ he added, ‘I am sure you regret

as sincerely as I do that you did not know the poor fellow.' And Michel withdrew, leaving his genial friend in a very angry mood.

Complete release did come at last. Towards the end of March a train was ready to carry a detachment to which Michel belonged to Paris. Anticipations after an enforced absence in prison, and in the midst of war, are not likely to be very bright, but now they were of a peculiarly gloomy character. Sinister rumours had been gathering of disturbances in Paris, but they were vague—distinct enough, however, to create no small alarm. As they approached nearer to the capital they gathered shape, and proved to be of a very ugly and threatening character indeed.

The train stopped at Villiers station. The soldiers wondered at the delay, and questioned each other impatiently. They were now under the orders of their own officers and were rather surprised at the order to descend, still more when, having done so, and fallen into line, they found themselves on the march to Versailles.

'A round-about way to the city, truly,' grumbled one.

'Ay,' said another, 'if what they say be true it will take some fighting as well as marching before we get in that way.'

'Wherefore?'

'The Reds.'

Michel shuddered as this conversation, carried

on between two officers, reached his ear. He thought of Annette shut up in the capital during the horrors of a siege, and then possibly in the midst of the peril of a revolution.

Sad, therefore, were his thoughts, as at the end of a long and weary march he entered the streets of Versailles. Crowds watched the captives as they filed past, most animated only by curiosity, a few having the intenser interest of friendship. Michel tramped along looking neither to right nor left, when suddenly he found his hand grasped with a fierce pressure, and a familiar voice shouting in his ear, 'Hurray. Michel vieux enfant. Dos Encore! Hurray. Back again, as I'm a living sinner. Hurray!'

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A PARK OF ARTILLERY.

FROM the time that the German troops had marched into and out of Paris a somewhat uneasy feeling prevailed. There was loud anger expressed by the lower and more violent class of the people, and everywhere it was said that had the defence been left to the National Guards alone no such disgrace would have been possible as the march of armed Prussians through the capital. Many parroted these phrases without meaning; amongst many they were the expression of very malignant and dangerous views. The suggestion of disbanding the National Guards even as a hint caused an access of fury, and it was such as the Government of National Defence, feeble as it was, and having as its only dependence the, as yet little known, National Assembly at Bourdeaux, dared not to venture on. The National Guards found the work light and the pay convenient. The play at soldiering indeed was quite pleasant, causing them to be looked upon as heroes without the disagreeable accompaniment of danger.

It was one of the misfortunes of the siege that

they had to be used. Experience had indeed taught the authorities to trust them as little as might be, but the people insisted on having a vast body of troops, and the troops being raised should be employed. The National Guards therefore were placed upon the ramparts, and distributed within the city. Amongst the other attempts to make them useful was assigning them a quantity of cannon to guard the heights of Montmartre and Chaumont. These cannon remained in position after the siege was at an end. The authorities bethought them of the weapons, and considered that it was high time they were removed so as to be under proper control.

Mike Mahony had by this time recovered the use of his leg, and at once reported himself at the Caserne Napoleon. His own regiment not being available, he with several others were thrown into a miscellaneous depot of all numbers until there was time to assign them their proper places. This left him comparatively free, and he was enabled to indulge his natural curiosity about the events passing around him.

‘Well,’ he remarked to himself, as by the early light of a March morning he was equipping himself at bugle call, ‘so dull a Pathrick’s Day I never see in all my days as itherday. There wasn’t so much as wan to offer me a Paddy’s pot or say “you lie.” I wondher now where might them handful o’ min be designed for?’



In the yard he observed a company of soldiers in full uniform. Gradually other companies came in, and he found a full regiment apparently bent for the march.

‘There wouldn’t be a brache o’ the paice between Bismarck and Thiers I suppose?’ he observed, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

With unusual promptness the regiment turned out and marched away. Mike followed rapidly, and soon overtook them. Stepping alongside the rank and conversing with some of the men, he learned that their destination was Montmartre first and then Chaumont.

‘What for?’ he asked.

‘To take away the cannon that are there, and prevent the National Guards doing mischief.’

‘How are you to bring them away? On your knapsacks is it?’

The soldier looked with a puzzled air at Mike, and then laughed, ‘Oh, the means will be found.’

The parks were entered. The cannon were there sure enough, and there were their National Guards keeping a very easy watch over them, the duty consisting mainly in exchanges of pipe lights. The officer in command of the troops desired the officer of the National Guard to be sent for, and when that functionary appeared showed him the order for the delivery of the cannon. The latter hesitated. Captain in the National Guard, he was a baker in private life. Though valiant in his

military capacity, in his heart there was always the recollection that he was a shopkeeper and a man—with a family. As an officer he would like to defy the tyranny of the Government, but as a baker he was apprehensive he might be shot. He looked at the order and read it; then he re-read it; then he regarded the glittering bayonets which surrounded the chassepots of the soldiers, and with a patriotic sigh he yielded up the custody of the guns. The National Guards were bade to give up their charge, and they withdrew sullenly, a couple of sentries of the regulars being placed about each cannon. Though the National Guards obeyed the order they remained standing in irregular groups at a little distance, looking with no friendly eye upon the force which they imagined had usurped their function. But there appeared no thought of resistance; they were merely indulging in that cheap defiance which gratifies those who have been subdued.

‘Easily accomplished after all, Colonel,’ said one of the captains.

‘Ay, so far. But, now we have got the guns, what are we to do with them? No sign of the horses yet?’

‘None that I can learn.’

‘Peste, we shall have mischief here if we have not the guns out of this quickly.’

But they had not the guns out quickly, nor at all. The horses had been ordered for the purpose of

carrying away the cannon, but the clerk in the War Office had sent it to the wrong department, and it was then on its way to Versailles. The Colonel despatched a messenger to the Ministry of War, but the messenger had to be sent from that to another department, which was found not to be the right one after all, and by the time that he, and a second messenger sent by the impatient Colonel, were endeavouring to find out how they could learn the proper parties to be applied to, the regiment was standing at ease smoking and chatting in the middle of an increasing crowd that gathered into the Park. The number of National Guards augmented, and it was noticed that all came armed. By-and-by there mingled in the groups men who were not National Guards, who did not seem workmen, still less gentlemen, who had an indescribably furtive air, and whose whole business seemed to be to whisper something fierce now in one ear now in another.

‘I wish to Heaven,’ said the Colonel impatiently, ‘we had these guns away.’

‘They can hardly fail to have the horses here soon.’

‘See, there is one of those oratorical scoundrels.’

Mike, who had placed himself within easy hearing distance of the military leaders, looked across the Park, and saw, mounted on a chair, a figure that seemed to him familiar. It was that of M.

Damarest. He was declaiming in a loud voice, but his exact words were not distinguishable. His gestures, however, which seemed pointed alternately at the guns, and at the soldiers, no doubt hinted of a connection between the two in his discourse, and in a spirit hostile to the army. While he was speaking there was heard away in the streets and lanes the roll of drums.

‘By Heaven,’ said the Colonel to his subordinate, ‘These ruffians are beating the rappel. Attention! Fall in!’

With a few rapid orders he recalled the soldiers into line.

The sound of the drums seemed to have created movement everywhere. The crowds rushed about in confusion; the National Guards fell into rank, not with the smartness and precision of the regulars, but somehow. Through the gates of the Park came increasing numbers of other National Guards, and with them of dirty ill-looking men carrying muskets, and sometimes, in belts, knives and revolvers. Between the two lines of armed men there was not a distance of a hundred yards. It seemed as if a word would have sufficed to scatter death like rain amongst the crowd civil and military. Suddenly a band of the armed civilians dashed over at one of the cannon, and took possession of it, two of them seating themselves triumphantly on the breech.

In a ringing voice the Colonel cried aloud, ‘In

the name of the Government I call upon you to disperse, or I fire.'

From the other side in shrill accents came the word, 'The soldiers of France will not fire upon their brothers.'

'Once again,' cried the Colonel, 'I call upon you to disperse.'

A mocking laugh rose up from the crowd.

The Colonel ordered the weapons of his men to the present, and then made a last appeal. 'My fellow-citizens,' he said, 'I am loth to spill blood, but if you do not immediately leave the grounds, I will do my duty at any risk.'

'Down with the aristocrats; Vive la République; Vive la Commune!' were the responses.

'I shall begin with those who have seized that gun,' he said sternly.

Again there rose mingled hooting, yelling, and laughter.

'Fire!' cried the Colonel.

There was no answering volley.

'Fire! I say,' he exclaimed in a voice of thunder.

For answer he saw the muskets of the soldiers elevated with the butt uppermost. Then arose a series of shrieks and shouts. The National Guards broke their line, and dashed across flinging their arms round the necks of the regulars. Men burst into hysterical weeping: women mingled in the group, and, intoxicated with excitement, flung

themselves in passionate embraces upon the soldiers. In the midst of the crowd suddenly and silently there appeared a tall pole from which the March wind blew out straight and steady a red flag. To this all eyes were turned. 'Vive la Commune!' called out the band who immediately surrounded it. The cry was wildly taken up and echoed, but it sent a shudder through some of those present. Amongst them were many of the soldiers.

'Good God!' said one of these to another, 'it is the Communaux with whom we have been fraternizing!'

'I thought they were only the Nationals, and I did not like to fire on them.'

The order of march came, and the regiment observed it, and defiled, but uncertainly, out of the gates of Chaumont.

'I had rather,' said the Colonel bitterly, 'have been defeated by the Prussians twice over than see my regiment so wanting in discipline.'

'And I am afraid,' answered the Captain, 'a double defeat by the Prussians would hardly be more mischievous than allowing these guns to remain in the hands of the lawless ruffians up in that quarter.'

Mike watched the departure of the regiment, and shook his head, philosophically discoursing to himself. 'I was never fond of seeing the peelers clear a fair, and I always thought it a shame to

have the horse sodgers intherfere with the people at an election; but these divvles — they aren't people at all in my opinion. Their red flag means blood, or Mike Mahony isn't the scholard his affectionate but welting schoolmaster thought him.'

## CHAPTER XX.

## A BAS LES TYRANS.

THE departure of the troops from Chaumont was, as may be supposed, the signal for a renewed outburst of cheering on the part of the victorious insurrectionists. Their triumph was still greater when, looking down the descent, it could be seen that the soldiers broke away from their ranks, some shame-stricken, some under the influence of the mutinous spirit that had taken possession of them, the efforts of their officers to restrain them being unavailing. Nothing could so accord with the temper of the mad crowd as the exhibition of insubordination.

‘Behold our brothers—our true brothers—resisting oppression,’ called one; ‘vive les lignards,’ cried another. ‘Ay,’ roared a third, ‘vive the liners who have broken line, but death to those who keep the ranks.’ ‘A bas les tyrans disciplinaires,’ was the yell of a fourth, while thousands of other ejaculations which the ear of the listener could not detect rose through the din and confusion that prevailed. The orator, whom Mike Mahony recognized, ascended once more the chair



he had constituted his rostrum, but every one was so occupied shouting his or her own sentiment that his voice was drowned, and no one paid attention to him. Mike's uniform would have put him in danger, but that it was generally supposed he was one of the soldiers who had broken rank, and was fraternizing with the people. He was, therefore, able to gratify his interest in the scene without risk, except from being smothered with embraces by enthusiastic male and female patriots when their attention happened to be turned his way.

When the yelling Communal throat had become wearied, a few shots were fired by way of variety. Then the orator having secured a lull stepped on to his chair, and proposed that a solemn volley be fired in commemoration of the great victory of humanity that had been achieved that day. The proposal was received with a shout.

In the fluctuation of the crowd, Mike had been brought somewhat nearer to the friend of humanity, and regarded him with much interest. While M. Damarest was addressing the crowd his musket reclined against a chair. As his proposition was applauded, he jumped nimbly down, and took into his hands the cherished weapon. From a pocket of his shabby coat he drew forth a cartridge, bit off the bullet end, and in a fumbling way contrived to get it into the barrel. The Nationals had fired before his cartridge was in the gun; most of the civilians had discharged their

pieces while he was balancing his preparatory to putting it to his shoulder ; but there were some dropping shots still from hands as inexperienced as his own. He was not quite alone then when he actually fired. Mike watched him with amused interest. He saw the blazing eyes shut as the hand was pressed to the trigger, and he could plainly discern the nervous agitation all over the whole frame in the interval between the attempt and the accomplishment of the discharge. The shot went off with a bang, and the recoil, which must have been terrific, sent the musketeer back into his chair.

A laugh arose.

The man sprang up with an evil light in his dark eyes, and he cried in a shrill and penetrating voice, 'You deride this weapon ? It will not be laughed at. Do you know that this has a destiny before it, and is named the slayer ? Vive the slayer of tyrants !'

The crowd, impressed with the ferocity of his manner, cheered in echo to his call.

'Ninety-Three,' he went on, 'used the guillotine. Glorious Seventy-One, higher in civilization, wider in purpose, will not behead one by one, but shall slay in platoons.'


Shouts followed the utterance of this sentiment, and new volleys were fired.

'When is the glorious dream,' he shrilly called, 'to be put into execution ? Even now, while in

the flush of the great popular victory. Beat the rappel, mes frères, en avant, brothers and sisters, the spirit of humanity calls upon us to go down to frivolous Paris and celebrate its glorious principles upon the boulevards !'

In their humour the crowd were easily impelled hither and thither. The rattle of the orator's empty words was enforced by the scarce more empty rattle of the drums, but all they wanted was noise to set them in motion. With renewed cries they crowded out through the gates. The National Guards made some show of marching in military order, but men, women, boys, and girls swarmed in amongst them, and soon they were only distinguishable from the rest of the mob by their uniform. As the crowds passed through the streets terror was depicted on the countenances of the inhabitants. Here and there a National Guard would show himself at his door unarmed, as if in protest against the debasement of the force, but for the most part passers would slink round corners or behind projections, and white faces peeped out of windows with fright written on every line.

With a view of giving the progress something of a military appearance, the drums were kept beating, and now and then a bugle was blown, none with any reference to the other, while the crowd kept constantly intoning the first verse of the Marseillaise, beyond which probably not



half-a-dozen of them could proceed. The effect was a grotesque discordance, the absurdity of which, however, was forgotten when one looked up at the ominous red flag which fancy could easily paint as a bloody idol to which the crowd were about to offer sacrifices.

Mike contrived to disentangle himself, and followed in the extreme rear of the multitude. It proceeded without opposition. The gendarmes shrank away; the few soldiers that were seen looked on with indifference, and in one or two instances shouted in harmony with the crowd. At the corner of a street there were suddenly seen two military men on horseback attended by an orderly. They reined up their horses to permit the crowd to pass, when the cry arose 'à bas les généraux!'

Mike could see over the heads of the mob the two men with calm impressive features, and perhaps something of disdain upon them.

A voice rang out in the clear shrill tones that Mike recognized well, 'It is Thomas—the infamous General Thomas—the tyrant of discipline!'

This cry was followed by a fierce roar of rage. In a moment the two officers were seized and dragged from their horses.

Mike made a wild dash to penetrate the crowd, but there were thousands between him and the victims.

Again in the midst of the roar he could hear

the baleful voice, 'Victims for the holy musketry of the Commune. Place there!'

A billow of the crowd bore him back as if there had suddenly been a space cleared in the centre.

'What are you doing, ruffians?' shouted Mike.

Fortunately for him his accents were drowned in the tempest of cries and ejaculations that were all round. He struggled to get through the press, but hundreds of others were struggling like him, and his actions excited no extraordinary attention. Hardly a minute had passed when all sounds were absorbed in one. The crowd was hushed by the report of about a dozen shots. Then arose a demoniac yell, and 'so perish all tyrants!' was shouted in a thousand accents.

There was a renewed confusion in the crowd. The horses, which were ordinary riding hacks, startled by the shots close to their ears, reared and pawed the air, scattering the crowd right and left. Then there was a horrid din, shrieks of affright mingled with laughter and curses.

'Shoot the beasts, as we did the masters,' called out some.

'Oh, for Heaven's sake don't,' yelled women's voices, 'or you will shoot us.'

Their terror increased by the shouting, the horses sprang in different directions through the crowd, which swayed hither and thither, crushing

and trampling each other with ruthless disregard.

A woman with a baby in her arms fell actually at Mike's feet, knocked down by a man who was rushing away.

'What the devil did you want here, madame?' said Mike roughly, as he raised her, bruised and disfigured, and replaced the wailing baby in her arms.

'I do not know,' she said, with a bewildered air. 'When the drums beat, and the shots fired, it seemed to me as if I went mad.'

'Go home in God's name, and keep out of this work, which is not fit for women—nor men neither.'

The woman burst into tears and disappeared.

'What brings you here, youngster?' he asked a little boy with a crutch, whom he also helped to raise.

He was about fifteen, with a delicate, thoughtful face. To his astonishment, the miserable object raised a shrill hurra, and cried in his piping voice, 'Death to all tyrants!'

'You young limb of Old Nick, they seem to have taught you well,' roared Mike, forgetful of the danger he ran in going counter to the passion of the crowd. But luckily for him he was not heeded. The incident which had scattered the crowd induced the bulk of them to move on in the pursuit of new objects to be sacrificed to the spirit

of humanity. There remained a number still, however, about the spot, but not so great as to prevent Mike from inspecting more closely the scene. On the ground lay the corpses of the two officers. They were General Thomas, a republican and a strict disciplinarian, and General Lecomte. Both were highly esteemed by all who respected patriotism and honourable character. They had fallen, both upon their faces, evidently pierced with many wounds, and dead without any protracted agony. Some three or four National Guards stood over them in an affected attitude as if they were doing sentinel duty.

‘Which of the two is Thomas?’ said one to the other.

‘This.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Quite sure.’

‘Well, I have a promise to fulfil in his regard.’

‘What is that?’

‘Voilà!’ and he jumped upon the body.

‘Wherefore that?’

‘When we were on the ramparts one night I finished a bottle of brandy, and naturally fell asleep. I was sentenced to a fortnight in the cells, and they told me it was by order of General Thomas. Then I swore I would one day trample on General Thomas, and you see, like a good and honest citizen, I have kept my oath.’

‘Brother, give me your hand; you are an honour to the ranks of the patriots.’

‘I declare to the Lord,’ said Mike Mahony to himself as he turned away to go back to his barracks, ‘I’m sorry I complained of Pathrick’s day being dull. If ’twas as stupid agen I’d be better plazed wid it than wid such a lively day as this.’



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE INTERNATIONAL.

SUNDAY in Paris is a time whose gaiety needs no description. Fine weather and the holiday-making spirit of the people tend to give it an aspect of animation such as is unknown in these gloomy latitudes. The day which followed the assassination of the two generals, and which happened to be a Sunday, presented no difference in externals from the ordinary. The city had not, of course, recovered from the shock of the siege, and its evidences of luxury had diminished, but this latter peculiarity was more noticeable on week-days. The bourgeoisie and working men had not lost the capacity for enjoyment, and the crowds scattered along the Boulevards, on even to the Bois de Boulogne, where the cut-down laurels gave painful evidence of the siege miseries, showed like the Paris of old. Yet the conversation was not in general as light-hearted in character as to be in keeping with the riant appearance of things. There was a vague, mysterious excitement prevailing. Men knew what had happened, and they were inclined to

guess that worse would come. In many instances the conjectures were of a very wild and gloomy character; probably no anticipation, however, reached the full truth.

Mike Mahony was not a Frenchman born, but he had one Parisian characteristic in perfection—he was a thorough flaneur. He liked as well as any loungeur of them all an idle stroll and gossip, and was of an affability of disposition which made him ready to hearken to any piece of news that might be communicated to him, no matter by whom. With such a tendency it is not wonderful that Mike found himself in conversation on that Sunday evening more than once with casual loungeurs like himself. He had thus fallen into chat with a quiet-looking bourgeois, who, with his wife and a couple of young children, was enjoying the wonderful beauty of the spring afternoon.

‘So you have been in the battles outside the walls,’ said madame to Mike. ‘My husband,’ she added proudly, ‘is of the National Guard.’

‘Indeed, madame, I am proud to know it.’

The worthy bourgeois sought to put the subject aside, ‘Do not, Marie, pet, talk of soldiers and Nationals in the same breath. Thou mightest as well compare professional and amateur actors.’

While they were speaking a dark-visaged man, not ill attired—indeed somewhat expensively and

showily dressed—mingled suddenly in their conversation.

‘Citizen Bouval,’ said he, ‘we missed you from the glorious demonstration of yesterday.’

‘What! you mean the assassination?’

‘I do not know what you call the assassination,’ responded the other coolly. ‘The patriots gloriously kept the arms with which they have defended the city, and have executed judgment on two tyrants.’

‘I was there,’ said Mike.

‘You!’

‘Yes.’

‘Ha, you were then one of the noble liners who fraternized with the people?’

‘No.’

‘What then?’

‘I was a soldier unattached who saw a parcel of scoundrels that had never fired a shot in defence of the city seize arms they want to misuse, and a mad crowd butcher two brave servants of the country.’

‘Ha,’ said the ill-visaged man, ‘Bouval, are you one of the fédérés?’

‘What is that?’

‘Do you not know?’

‘I do not,’ was the reply, with a sort of stolid accentuation.

‘They are the National Guards who have enrolled themselves under the glorious flag of the Commune.’

‘I am not one of them and will not be.’

‘Good.’

‘What do you mean by good?’

‘I mean that you are about to bring condign punishment upon your head. To refuse to join the patriot ranks is treason; to be found consorting with one of the military enemies of the country—a slanderer who belies the Commune—is double treason. Therefore beware.’ He turned and was departing.

‘Stop, friend,’ cried Mike with emphasis.

An evil scowl sat upon his face as he looked questioningly at Mike.

‘Do you know that you deserve to have your head broken for what you have just said?’

‘Is that all you have to say to me?’

‘No, it isn’t.’

‘What more then?’

‘That I’ll do it if you don’t take your sallow complexion away out of that.’

There was a look of rough earnestness about Mike’s eyes which showed a disposition to carry out his threat. It was so plain to the ill-visaged man that, simply muttering to Bouval the word ‘remember,’ he turned on his heel and disappeared.

‘And now,’ said Mike, ‘that that ugly face is out of my sight, I feel more easy. Don’t you, ma’am?’

‘I do not,’ said Bouval; ‘I am not a very timid man, but I confess I fear him and his associ-

ates, and I dread them more when I do not actually see them than when I do.'

'And who are they?'

'Do you not know?'

'Not I, faith, except that they are probably blackguards.'

'The International.'

'And that is?'

'Well, it is not thoroughly known, but they preach atheism, revolution, and robbery. Or, if they don't actually preach, they mean it. They have their agents everywhere. He'—indicating the ill-visaged stranger—'is one of them, and I am quite sure they mean to take advantage of the state of this unfortunate city to make mischief here.'

After some further chat, Mike withdrew thoughtfully in the direction of his barrack. He was much impressed by the information of his bourgeois acquaintance; it was therefore with a start he learned on his arrival at his quarters that all the troops of the line were to be marched to Versailles the next morning. By dint of questions and hints he soon gathered that the reason for this movement was that the troops could not be depended on to quell the disturbances that were feared.

When this had become clear to his mind, though the hour was somewhat advanced, Mike set off directly for the Hotel Villecourt. He wished to see Annette and warn her of the im-

pending danger. The ambulance was no longer crowded. Most, indeed, of its patients had been discharged cured, or despatched to that ward where wounds give no further trouble, and sickness no worry—where after life's fitful fever men sleep well. As a quondam patient, and one who reflected credit on the skill of the senior surgeons, Mike had no difficulty in making his way into the one apartment now used for the remaining sufferers, while waiting until he could see Annette. He had, indeed, a hope that he might find her there, but in any case he was anxious to make enquiry about the condition of his fellow-sufferers. Half-an-hour rolled away, while he was asking after Jean and Claude, and learning that Astolfe's arm was taken off, and that he died under the operation; while big Armand, that nobody thought could live, so completely broken in pieces did he seem, had actually walked out the other day cured.

At length Annette appeared. Mike saw with concern that the poor girl had lost much of her robust, healthy aspect, and had grown pale and anxious.

'Miss Annette,' he said, 'you do not look as I would like to see you.'

'Oh, it is nothing. I go out very little, and that is all. To a girl reared in the freedom of the country it is of course a change, but that is nothing.'

'I am afraid you have but a sad time of it here.'

'Sad! Oh, gracious Providence, it is terrible.'

'How? is there more misfortune?'

'Have you not heard? It is dreadful.'

'What is it?'

'The Marquis——'

'Not dead is he?'

'No, not dead, but dying, I fear. He lies in our room passing away to all appearance; the Marquise in another scarcely better, and she does not know it.'

'That is indeed horrible.'

'The Marquis was so desperate after the death of his son that I have heard he exposed himself at every possible opportunity, but strange to say escaped without a wound. It was, however, in the very last fight, when he had wandered away from his comrades, that he seems to have been struck by a shell, which has completely paralyzed him. He was picked up by a strange ambulance, and was more than a month in it, when by mere chance an acquaintance recognized him and brought him hither.'

'And the Marquise does not know this?'

'No, she fancies that the siege is going on still, and that he is away with his corps.'

'That's enough to make one down-hearted, indeed. But, Miss Annette, there's worse coming. There's going to be a revolution here of the Reds.'

'Ah, that is terrible to think of.'

'And what's worse still, the soldiers are going to be drawn off to Versailles and the city left without protection.'

'Can that indeed be?'

'It seems a wonder, doesn't it? They think the troops can't be depended on.'

'Oh, what shall we come to?'

'I'm under orders for Versailles in the morning.'

'Indeed. Well, dear friend, I am glad at all events that you will be out of the peril.'

'And you yourself be in it?'

'Oh, I am not a soldier, and run no particular risk.'

'Annette, you know there is danger. These are wild devils, they say, that are capable of murdering and burning the whole city. You ought to leave it.'

'Impossible.'

'You have no tie here.'

'No tie! If only you think of the misery of these two upstairs, can you say I have no tie?'

'Michel will likely now be discharged from prison, and it is to Versailles, no doubt, he will be sent.'

A tear glittered in Annette's bright eye, and a faint blush peeped through the paleness of her cheek. 'Ah, good Mike, do not tempt me. I have known Michel to be in danger, and I have waited patiently and hoped in Providence that he would be brought out of it and restored to me.'



Let my brave Michel, too, have patience and trust, and believe that if it seems good to our God I shall be brought out of the danger, too. But I think he would despise me if through fear for myself I abandoned so plain a duty as there is here. Go—my friend—his friend—trusty, brave comrade; go, and God bless you both, and bring you safe back again to me.'

Without staying to hear a word of remonstrance from Mike she pressed his hand lightly, and vanished from the room.

'I always see,' said Mike musingly, as he wended his way back to his barracks, 'France done in pictures as a woman. I never rightly understood it before. By the mortal, but that girl has the soul and the spirit of all France in her heart.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

## A BLACK MARK.

THOSE who saw M. Damarest hastening through the streets of the Faubourg St Germain on that Sunday evening would have perceived a difference from the same man as we first introduced him to our readers. He was still shabby in attire, and rather mean in his person, but his air was cheerful, his step was jaunty, his spirits evidently light. He still, however, preserved the habit of muttering to himself the thoughts which were uppermost in his mind, and those who were curious enough to watch him might often observe an oratorical gesture, as if he were in the act of addressing an assembly of his fellow-countrymen. 'Yes,' he rattled on, 'it was a glorious time. I accomplished it completely. Though I shut my eyes when I pulled the trigger I saw them fall, and I know it was my bullet—my grand, my historic bullet—that carried death to the heart of the tyrant Thomas. Henceforth, my career is free. The wretched nervousness with the musket has passed off, and the only drawback to my power over the multitude has disap-

peared. I can shoot as well as speak, I can execute as well as denounce. Hitherto I have spoken with effect—to-night I will electrify them—Hallo!’—

‘Hallo, you. Why the devil don’t you look before you?’

M. Damarest, plunged in anticipated oratory, had bounced up against a soldier behind whom the gate of a large mansion just closed.

‘Insolent—what, I have seen you before. You are the soldier with the crutch?’

‘I am the soldier without the crutch now, and let me tell you my feet are in excellent order for kicking.’

M. Damarest thought to himself, ‘Ah, if I had only the beloved with me—my musket.’ As he had not, however, he deemed it more prudent to moderate his tone a little, and remarked in a less contemptuous way, ‘You hurt me by the manner in which you jostled me.’

‘Ah, you shouldn’t walk through the streets with your eyes shut. It is enough to do that when you are firing a musket.’

There was a lamp shining over the gateway, and Mike, for he was the speaker, perceived that the face of the man he addressed had become livid with rage.

‘You,’ he said, ‘are one of those servile tools of the aristocracy who affect to believe that patriots are cowards. You have just sneaked out of one of their mansions of luxury.’

'Yes,' replied Mike coolly. 'It is a mansion where I had the luxury of getting a broken leg mended.'

'No doubt, they affected philanthropy while the people were perishing in defence of the country or dying of starvation.'

'Look here, my good friend,' answered Mike calmly. 'You are an orator, I see; I have heard you. Do you really want to know the truth? The lady that owned that house turned it into a hospital, and tended the wounded with her own hands. Her son went as a private soldier into the ranks, and was slain in battle: her husband the Marquis de Villecourt is paralysed by the effects of a shot received in the siege; she herself is dying with grief and trouble. Is that something for you to make a speech against?'

'If what you say were true,' shrieked the other, 'I would believe it to be all an infernal scheme to discredit the patriotism of the people. But it is not true—I swear it is the abode of luxury and aristocratic oppression.'

'You do?'

'I do,' yelled in a shrill accent the Communist, 'I do, and the day will come when I shall visit it in punishment.'

M. Damarest found himself suddenly caught by the collar, and a stern face looking into his. 'Look, monsieur communal, or blackguard, or whatever you are—I know you to be a scamp, I

think you are an assassin—Providence would reward me, I think, for shaking the wretched life out of you this minute. But mind, if you ever dare to lay a finger on that house, or on any one in it, as sure as you have two eyes in your head that burn as if they might have been two presents from the devil, your master—I'll follow you and—and—' here the French vocabulary failed Mike for a word sufficiently terrific, and he was obliged to wind up with a bellow—' I'll massacre you.'

Flinging the startled Communist from him, Mike stalked away without casting a glance behind.

The interview left boiling passions in the breast of M. Damarest. Rage accompanied him to the Foudroyant, and gave augmented bitterness to his denunciation of tyrants. It still swelled his heart when the next day he marched through the street at the head of a vast rabble, composed partly of National Guards, now called Federals, partly of all the non-uniformed scum of the city. It received little solace until the day was well advanced, when a strange rumour ran through the city, bringing exultation to its rascality, and terror to all that was honest or reputable within its walls.

'It cannot be true!' said M. Damarest to his informant.

'It is. Behold the news in all the journals.'

‘All the troops marched out to Versailles?’

‘There is not a lignard left within the walls of Paris.’

‘Glorious intelligence! Shout citizens, patriots, brothers and sisters of the Commune. Terrified by your valour and resolution, the hirelings of a corrupt government and a perfidious aristocracy have fled from before you.’

The citizens male and female shouted and yelled. The fervour of the orator’s enthusiasm was enhanced by the diligent distribution of wine and spirits, which were freely given round by women decked out in imitation of vivandières.

‘Now is the time for decisive action,’ cried the orator.

‘What shall we do? Whither shall we go?’ was cried from the crowd. There were also shouts for the ‘Hotel de Ville,’ ‘the Ministry of War,’ and several other places.

‘To Versailles,’ cried one, ‘and let us cut to pieces the flying hirelings.’

M. Damarest disapproved of this suggestion, which was not in his vein. ‘Citizens!’ he exclaimed, ‘there is in this city an institution which holds the plunder of the people.’

‘Down with it,’ was called by a thousand voices.

‘No, we shall not destroy it——’ Here there was a tremendous interruption.

The orator, however, continued, ‘We shall not

destroy it, but we shall restore the plunder to the people.'

Yells of ardent approval were mingled with cries of 'What is it?'

'The Bank!'

Here a deafening shout rose up and immediately the ragged mob were on their way. The tumult of their approach was audible a long distance off, and excited attention in the threatened building. When the mob arrived before it they were rather staggered to see doors and windows strongly barred, and, what was even more repulsive to their feelings, indications that a strong party of armed men were within and prepared for resistance. It was plain that the plunder of the people must at present remain in its den, and the cry which rose up from the crowd was that of hopeless rage.

'But, my friends,' cried the voice of the orator, 'there is yet a task before us to be performed in the name of outraged humanity.'

The appeal to humanity was always successful with this humane crowd, and it shrieked approval.

'My brothers, my sisters, I speak to you in the name of our languishing brethren. Through my feeble accents France calls to you to restore to her bosom her suffering children. Friends of the people, I cry "To the prisons! to the prisons!"'

'To the prisons!' was re-echoed in the myriad

voices of the crowd, and once again the disorderly procession set forth. In their new mission they found no difficulty. Whether through complicity or apprehension the authorities interposed little or no obstacle. If their conduct appears cowardly compared with that of the bankers, it may be admitted they were justified in considering what they had to guard was of less value than what the Bank had in custody.

Out from the prisons trooped every form of rascality, and the army of liberation with its new accessions was perhaps as terrifying an object to peaceable citizens as could be conceived. For the present, however, they did no small rapine; disappointed at the Bank, they did not descend to lesser game. They carried on the procession, however, the crowd growing larger, dirtier, viler, and fiercer with each yard of its progress.

The leader's vanity was amply gratified by the conviction that here he was guiding the people. To what he could scarcely have suggested himself. The political object he had in his mind was as vague and uncertain as the errant march they were making through the capital. His suggestions to plunder the Bank and to empty the prisons were not part of a settled programme, but just the fancies which crossed a bizarre imagination. In this mood he gave the word 'To the ramparts,' and the mob in most admired disorder



followed the hint. It gave somewhat of a dramatic close to what he styled in imitation of the Federalists of '93 that 'beau jour.' For, as they reached, they saw a party of National Guards, who had now substituted the red cockade for the tricolor, solemnly closing one of the gates.

'Thus, brothers,' he yelled to the crowd, 'we shut out the base outside world from Paris. Thus we have done with a vile Government; thus we exclude from amongst us all the fetters that would enchain man; thus we put an end to law which cramps the development of the people; thus we have done with property which is the robbery of the people; thus we trample out religion, and put in its place the eternal genius of humanity.'

'Vive the genius of humanity,' cried some, with a glimpse of the orator's meaning; 'Vive robbery!' called out others who were probably almost as exact. With such exclamations and such shouts the orator was gratified, but the crowd after a time melted away, and Paris passed in tolerable tranquillity the first night in which she was left without legitimate defenders of public order.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE NEW CULTUS.

VERY terrible events may go on in large cities without disturbing the general aspect to any great extent. During the two months which followed, all the bases of society were shaken, the wiser and more patriotic of the citizens felt deeper pain than they did during the period of the siege, and yet there was not much to strike the casual passer through the streets.

Annette Beaune, kept close in her attendance upon the patients who had so curiously fallen to her charge, was not often out of doors, and had little intercourse with strangers within. The doctor who came to visit the Marquis and Marquise shook his head when she asked him for news, or briefly used some such phrase as 'things going from bad to worse.' She heard the booming of cannon at times to the westward, but not so loud or continuously as when the Germans were attacking the city. Rumours, too, of violent exhibitions here and there came to her ears, and the stray journals of which she caught sight seemed to indicate a revolutionary excitement

that might become very dangerous indeed. But no visible disturbance of tranquillity met her eyes for a considerable period, and she was beginning to indulge the hope that somehow things would grow peaceable without more misery or bloodshed.

In this frame of mind she went to visit the convent where she had first practised her duties as a nurse, and saw her teacher Sister Victoire. Here, for the first time, her mind, through the fears of others, became impressed with the gravity of the occasion.

‘But, sister,’ she said, ‘I have seen nothing half so alarming as in December and January, or so dreadful as the hunger and cold.’

‘You allude to the shells fired into the city?’

‘I do.’

‘Child, I have seen those shells as well as you. I was at the bed-side of a patient when one of them blew the roof off the house, and tore away the head of the bed in which she was lying; and my fear was so light that the mere utterance of a Pater and Ave restored me to complete composure.’

‘And are you, who were so fearless then, afraid now?’

‘I think, Annette, you have courage?’

‘I am not very timorous. When I got used to the shells I did not mind them.’

‘Exactly. But would you yet be afraid of being thrown into a den of wild beasts?’

A shudder passed through the girl's frame.  
'And is it so terrible as that?'

'They are only growling and snapping at each other, for the most part, as yet, and their ferocity is not fully visible, but when their hunger for blood and destruction is fully awakened, then may God look down upon this city.'

'Why do you think it is to be so awful?'

'Because they have dethroned God and set human passion in His place. They make their own evil hearts their sole guide and master. They hold that man is to live without faith and without law, but that is and has been always impossible. When they abandon the true God they bow to idols, which they call by sounding names, and their freedom is a mere slavery to Satan. Alas, alas, we shall see.'

'But may this not pass away? May not the Government outside the walls obtain the mastery soon?'

'Oh, it may be, but it would be too sanguine to hope much from outside.'

'What is it these people do?'

'It is not so much what they have done as what they seem tending towards that alarms me. But they have assassinated in many instances, they have robbed with system, they are diligently corrupting the minds of men and women—all their soldiers are more or less drunken, and the orgies which they call demonstrations are shared

in by women that used not to be shameless. Religion is the leading object of their hostility. They have suppressed the teaching in the Christian schools and in the convents; they are desecrating the churches; they are putting the members of religious orders on some pretext or other into the places of the forçats whom they have restored to freedom.'

'This is, indeed, dreadful, sister,' said Annette, as she rose to depart.

'It is, child, but have courage. Adieu. You know where to place your trust. "Be not afraid—thy Help is near."'

The conversation with the sister of charity had considerably startled and depressed Annette. She hastened sadly on her way, which led her past the Hotel de Ville. Here a considerable crowd somewhat impeded her passage, and she was compelled to pay attention to the appearances round her. The steps were filled with a rabble who seemed to be constantly moving in and out, some in uniform, some in plain blouses or other civilian costumes, most of them armed. In the windows might be seen dirty faces exchanging grimaces with the crowd below. A confused murmur of voices seemed to ooze from the chamber within, and, as it were, be driven back by the more powerful flood of noise from without. Around the gate was a guard of federal troops, numerically strong, but destitute of anything like a military air. Mingled

in their ranks were men and women of the lowest class conversing and freely partaking of the refreshments which vivandières were busy in dispensing. Several horses were being led up and down the place. They were for the most part gaily caparisoned in a semi-military, semi-fanciful style.

Presently there was a movement in the crowd, and a tall man in a flashy uniform, over which gold lace was liberally distributed, came clattering down the stairs.

'C'est l'aide de camp, Martel,' said a voice near Annette. 'How grand the grocer has become.'

'I say,' said the Federal whom he addressed, 'there was nothing worse under the tyranny of the Empire than to put that dunderhead in command of men like me who have seen service.'

'Quite true, neighbour,' was the friendly response.

'Place there,' cried the aide de camp in a loud imperious voice, and with features absolutely swollen with dignity. 'Place, I say! Despatches for the forts I bear.'

He pushed sternly at the crowd, and cleared his way with determination. Unfortunately, one of his spurs caught in the dress of one of the women who here, as everywhere else, were mingled with the mob. He stumbled. Recovering himself, he turned round with an oath to abuse

the cause of his misfortune, when the jerk got his sword between his legs, and he fell against the door. A roar of laughter from those in the immediate neighbourhood greeted him as he rose. 'Canaille, you ought to be shot,' he muttered with as much anger as if he were a grand seigneur of the time of Louis Quatorze. His horse was led to him, and he mounted. The animal, a very lean remnant of those saved from the hunger of the siege, had enough spirit left to grow a little restive at the noise around. When the cavalier had got one foot in the stirrup the animal indulged in a curious side-long motion which compelled the aide to go hopping after him in a fashion that the crowd applauded with great vehemence. 'Splendid!' 'The best dancer in the Commune!' 'A pirouette now.' 'Music for the dance of M. l'aide,' were greetings which saluted the ear of the anxious soldier. An orderly came and caught the horse by the bridle, but the effect of this was only to change the motion to a circular one, and to compel the aide to make longer hops. At last a couple of soldiers came and fairly lifted the cavalier into the saddle. Stung by the taunts of the crowd the aide now gallantly stuck his spurs into the side of the restive steed. The animal resented it, and seeking to revenge the insult on somebody else, flung back his heels wildly. No one was within range, but the movement had the effect of jerking the

distinguished officer forward in such a manner as seriously to imperil his seat. But the hero with presence of mind and judgment abandoned the rein, which gave no real security, for the mane which he grasped firmly with both his hands, and in this fashion his steed bore away from the yelling crowd the aide de camp of the Commune, with despatches to the Commander of the Forts.

Annette was more frightened than amused with what she beheld, but her progress was of enforced slowness. Before she had got clear of the crowd she saw another mounted officer leave the building—a coarse, red-faced man, whose magnificent uniform seemed to sit rather awkwardly on his round shoulders. But he was evidently a favourite with the crowd. Cheers greeted him, and the companion who, to Annette's astonishment, rode alongside him. It was a young woman, not uncomely as regards features, but wearing in her countenance those traits which the true woman sees with shame. She was got up in tawdry attire like the rider of a circus out in a procession. She was yet more loudly cheered by the crowd than the General. Annette was thankful that she had at last reached the skirt of the multitude.

It was early in the afternoon. The church of St Eustache was near her, and she determined to say a passing prayer within its walls. Around it there were more people than usual, as if some-



thing important were going on. But she did not pay much heed. She thought no more of the people she saw than she did of the fantastic and striking piece of architecture whose strangely composite form rose before her. She only felt the need of prayer. As she entered the porch, however, her attention was awakened. There were great numbers in the church, but it was too plain they were not worshippers. The large number of men first surprised her; she saw that several were smoking. The hum of voices as if of a crowd at a public meeting startled her. In a corner she observed three or four squatted on the floor busily engaged with a pack of dirty cards. She had crossed herself reverently on entering; some women near her set up a shrill laugh. Annette saw that the pulpit was occupied; it was by a layman who wore his hat. He apologized to the crowd for doing so, and said were he in the open air politeness would compel him to address his fellow-citizens and brethren uncovered, but he wanted in that building to avoid even the appearance of truckling to superstition. The groups immediately round appeared to be paying attention to the speaker, but the rest chatted and talked amongst each other, and here and there quarrelled, and often came to blows, without paying the slightest heed to what was going forward. The church was more light-some than usual. Annette soon saw the cause—

most of the magnificent stained glass windows were broken. Thus, said one of the new occupants of the pulpit, the light of all-sufficing nature had been let in upon the darkness of priestcraft. Looking up at the altar, Annette's horror was complete. A boy had climbed upon the tabernacle and twisted his legs about it; men were sitting upon the altar, on which there was placed a small stool holding bowls and glasses for wine. One man was pouring some of the liquid down the throat of a child who was resisting with all his might. The girl could not bear to examine the further details of the defilement. She turned and fled speedily on her way back to the Hotel Villecourt, as if she felt herself pursued by the breath of demons.

'Alas! alas!' she sighed to herself, 'I can but too well perceive the reason for Sister Victoire's fears.'

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A VISIT TO PARIS.

**B**EAUTIFUL May had come again, the most delightful time of the whole year in the environs of Paris. Versailles palace in undiminished grandeur stared down the long broad walks, and over the stately fountains, and through the great alleys of poplars which were now clothed in glorious green. But there had been few holiday visitors here for many a day. During the past autumn and winter German horse trampled the elegant turf, and German infantry turned the grounds into a barrack. Mont Valérien too had contributed to the disarray, and ploughed up the verdure with some of its monster shells. The Germans had all disappeared from that side of the city, but the change was only to substitute the kepi for the helmet. The royal grounds still swarmed with soldiers, and the palace was once more the head-quarters of an army. This time it was a French force and MacMahon was at its head. The Generals had a busy and a gloomy time of it. They had to capture Paris and yet to spare it. They had to treat it like an armed madman

whom it is necessary at once to overpower and to save.

There was no deficiency of intelligence as to what was going forward within. Day by day news came in all forms. Evasions of the guard upon the ramparts were not difficult, for the watch was kept in slovenly style by soldiers some of whom were drunken and many unwilling. Desertions were of constant occurrence, too. The journals came to hand almost as regularly as if there were open communication, and the debates of the Commune were carefully and systematically read at Versailles. These broad sheets were indeed interesting in many ways, recording, as they did, a steady downward progress. The suppression of every print of respectability, the abrogation of every law for the protection of life and property, the perpetual incitement to the assassination of obnoxious honest men, and that augmenting ribaldry of language which is one of the most infallible signs of a decaying moral condition, were all observed. The feature, however, which excited most comment and probably most indignation was the series of proclamations which turned defeats into victories, and sought to persuade the dupes or prisoners—whichever they might be called—of the Commune—that the grip of punishment was not about to close upon its crimes.

‘Heh, Voss,’ said one of a group of non-com-

missioned officers, 'you were at the taking of Issey?'

'I was.'

'And you, Irlandais?'

'Well, yes, I lent a hand.'

'Now, what romances you must be telling. Here have I it on the authority of one of these honest messieurs of the Commune that the gates were opened to you by treason.'

'Par mon âme, then, I'm sorry to say one of these messieurs, instead of opening the gates, took the liberty of opening my skull with his bayonet, just where you see this fine plaster here, injuring, I'm afraid, the beauty of my countenance.'

'Did you buy your way in?'

'No,' said Michel briefly.

'How did you get in?'

'I walked over Federals.'

'Did they then really fight well?'

'Most did not—a few did, but they were deserted by the rest. It was serious, however, while it lasted. Our party was heavily cut up.'

'At all events, you will not assist in taking any more of the forts or assailing the city?'

'We will not! why so?'

'Ce monsieur in this journal quotes an appeal of the gentlemen of the Commune, and says that after you have read it it will not be possible for you to fight them any longer.'

‘Read it.’

The soldier spread out the paper with an affected air, and read with a snuffle:—“It is now two months since, on the 18th of March, your brothers of the army of Paris, with hearts ulcerated towards the cowards who have sold France, fraternized with the people. Imitate them.”

‘Curse them!’ interrupted a listener, ‘only for them we should not have to do this infernal siege!’

‘Soldiers!’ continued the reader, “our sons and our brothers, hearken, and let your conscience decide! When the command is infamous disobedience is a duty.”

‘These are very grand words,’ remarked Mike, ‘though I can’t say I quite get at the meaning.’

‘Well,’ said the reader, ‘perhaps this would help your comprehension,’ and he proceeded to declaim again from the journal. “The Citizen Cantenaire, at the head of a hundred fuséens, will burn the suspected houses and the public monuments of the left bank. The Citizen Dumoure, with a hundred fuséens, is charged with the first and second arrondissement. The Citizen——”

Here the reading was interrupted by the sound of a bugle.

‘Halloa, that is to fall in. Something up.’

‘And quite time that we were at these ruffians,’ said Mike Mahony as the group dispersed, each

going to his own place. 'Don't you think so, Michel?'

'Think so?' groaned the latter. 'Oh, it is frightful to fancy what may be occurring in Paris under the reign of these demons. If it were not for the necessity of obeying orders and doing my duty as commanded, I would make my way into that city by myself, and watch over my poor darling imprisoned within it.'

'And a very foolish thing you would be doing, mon camarade. There is but one chance of safety for her and for every decent soul in Paris, and that is the capture by the troops and putting a real government in place of these beggars that have got the reins.'

Michel sighed, as he confessed the truth of this homely argument.

'Keep up a good heart. It's a grand thing to remember that when you're fighting for your country you are, as it were, going courting the girl you are so long parted from.'

In a few minutes the speakers formed portion of an advanced party in the trenches.

'It is,' said Michel to his companion, 'down-right torture to be here, helpless—doing nothing—and to think of the perils of my poor love. If we were even fighting.'

'No doubt,' said Mike gravely, 'when a fellow is in trouble, there's nothing like a good fight to ease his mind; you didn't feel half the uneasiness

when we used to be out on the shachrawn—that's going after the Prussians.'

'It is quite true.'

'By japers, I don't see why we mightn't revive it a bit. To be sure, I'd rather be shooting Prussians than French, that seem almost like my own countrymen; but it's a doubt to me if these thieves aren't worse than the Prussians themselves.'

'Do you mean that we should go forward to the walls and try to get in?'

'Just that.'

'Allons. No need to say, be cautious.'

'Not the least in life.'

The two men crept out of the entrenchment, and resuming the manner with which they had once been familiar, advanced with great circumspection, and yet with considerable quickness, until they got to the foot of the ramparts. The spot they reached lay between Auteuil and the Pont du Jour. The walls had been knocked about a good deal by the bombardment, and the debris lay in masses outside. They ascended carefully, but there was still a height above them not easily reached. 'Up on my back, Michel,' whispered Mike. Without a moment's hesitation Michel ascended this new scaling ladder, and looked carefully round. 'There is not,' he said after a long examination, and in a low tone, 'as much as a sentry on either bastion or rampart



here.' As he spoke a shell from the St Cloud batteries struck the parapet about twenty yards from them, scattering the materials almost to their feet. 'And reason good that little messenger gives for their departure,' muttered Mike.

'I can make my way into the city at last,' said Michel.'

'Better have a regiment or two at your back when you're going in,' answered Mike, 'come down and we'll call them.'

Michel yielded to the counsel of his friend, and descended. In a moment their kepis were waving on the top of their bayonets. For a while the signal seemed to be misunderstood, and while they were waving a second shell whistled close past them, this time, however, without striking any object near. 'It is hard lines,' muttered Mike. 'They're like ould Flannery, the dispensary doctor at Cappagh, that used to try the new physic on his family, to see how 'twould act. To be practisin' on two of their own that are going to show 'em the way in!'

At last the signal seemed to be comprehended, and about a hundred men with a couple of officers left the trenches, and advanced to where the comrades stood together on their somewhat perilous elevation. As the reinforcement came nearer they understood more clearly the opportunity thus offered to them.

‘Now then, Michel,’ said Mike, ‘is your time before they come. Up with you.’

‘For what?’

‘To be first in.’

‘And you?’

‘Oh, I’m content to be second. You’re a Frenchman, and I may say you’re at home in this city. I’m a bashful Irishman, and I’d like to have some one to introduce me. Are you up? You may mention that there’s a distinguished hero all the way from Ireland—hold hard—steady—coming over here to—oh, by the hokey—that takes the wind out of a fellow—to pay his respects to the gentlemen with the red flag.’

As he spoke the last words Mike stood on the ramparts where his comrade had preceded him. Before a minute had passed some few of the soldiers who had hastened to their aid were alongside, and gradually the whole band had mustered. The senior officer, who suddenly found himself actually within the beleaguered city, was almost bewildered by the magnitude of his own achievement, though in a brief time he was able to take his measures. He had the salients to right and left examined. In the former there was no one; in the latter was seen a sentry lying down in a state of drunken insensibility.

One of the men was going to awaken him with a kick when the officer stopped him. While they were engaged on the inspection a third shell

struck the rampart at a little distance from them. 'Ha,' said the officer, 'we shall be pounded to pieces here by our own guns. They have no notion of our capture. I want a messenger. Come, my lads,' said he turning to Michel and Mike, 'as you were the first in the privilege is for one of you. It is certain promotion to whomsoever carries the first news of the entry of the troops.'

'Unless M. l' officier absolutely commands me, I would rather not go,' answered Michel.

'And you?' said the officer turning to Mike.

'The fact is, monsieur, my comrade and I have a friend to see here, and we'd rather not go back until the little meeting is over.'

The officer smiled, but made no objection to their refusal as another messenger was easily found, and he proceeded to make his dispositions to hold the place he had got.

While so engaged the shots from the batteries at St Cloud came with uncomfortable frequency, and with an aim so accurate that it became evident that they had a good deal to do with the desertion which favoured the entrance of the soldiers.

'A very nice bit of practice,' said Mike with a critical air, as a shell took about a cart load of bricks off the top of the parapet, and sent them flying in all directions, one going within a few inches of his own head. 'I declare it reminds

me of the county election. The pavers then flew about in the same elegant manner, and one of them was as near letting daylight into my skull.'

'Mike, we are at last in Paris,' said Michel with an expression of deep anxiety on his face, 'and I do not feel sure that I am not more miserable and uneasy than before we entered it.'


'Now, Michel, don't be unreasonable; you can't get things settled here without a bit of fighting, I suppose; but that we'll have immediately, please God; and then, take my word for it, you'll find your Annette safe and sound and quite ready to be off in happiness with her bould soldier boy.'

As he spoke, a rifle bullet struck the wall behind them. It was fired from a house at a considerable distance, from the window of which was slowly thrust out a flag, oscillating in the light breeze; its hue was plain—the ill-omened red.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

WHILE forts and batteries at the east side of the city were exchanging their iron compliments the Palais Royal maintained something of its old aspect. Its shops still offered their nick-nacks, books were still bought at the stalls, and men and women still ate and drank at the cafés. One man, in especial, who was seated in the grand salle of one of the best appointed, performed the feat of eating and drinking as if there were no other business in life to be accomplished. Two waiters were kept in incessant motion endeavouring to gratify the whimsical caprices in which he indulged at his breakfast. Now he would have chablis, which he would order back, and then he would have champagne. At the suggestion of coffee he simply exclaimed, 'disgusting.' The fish was not to his taste, and he would admit no plea on the score of the siege. It might do well enough for the canaille to abstain on that account, but their wretched establishment ought to be prepared to give suitable entertainment to a person of his class. Grumbling in



a high, arrogant tone, trifling with a journal which lay on the table near him, eating, and dipping pretty heavily into the champagne bottle, he at last accomplished his elegant meal. Having done this he rose with a lazy air, and called for his bill. The bill was brought. A slight start of surprise was manifest as he looked at the amount, but he immediately assumed a nonchalant air, drew a splendidly-embroidered purse from his pocket, and from it took a billet de banque which he flung upon the table. 'Seventy-five francs,' he said, 'is too much for a wretched meal like that you have given me. But no matter. There is a note for a hundred—keep the change.' The astonished waiter bowed with a reverence that was perfectly genuine. His magnificent paymaster threw his head in the air, and cast his eyes across the room as if it were beneath him to notice the homage of the servitor. Then he drew on his hands a pair of straw-coloured kid gloves, which suited in lightness a generally staring costume, placed upon his dark and fearfully-oiled locks a shining hat, and took into his right hand a natty umbrella. With his left he took up a huge bouquet of the gaudiest flowers, and strutted from the apartment.

This elegant personage was M. Damarest, whom a short time since we introduced to the reader under very different surroundings. He was no

longer a workman discontented because out of employment and hungry. His tawdry orations and his ferocity of disposition suited the temper of the time, and he had soared to a leading place in the Commune. He was one of the pets of the mob around the Hotel de Ville, especially since he had contrived to get it hinted that he resembled Robespierre. It was to favour this notion he constantly provided himself with a bouquet, and of late he contrived to make all his public appearances with flowers in his hand. He further sought to strengthen the resemblance by personal denunciations and by sweeping demands for the execution of aristocrats and tyrants. The abstemiousness of the original was not, however, so much to his taste, and none of his colleagues had contrived to secure a larger share of the proceeds of the requisitions by means of which all the private property of the capital was placed at their disposal.

M. Damarest proceeded at a leisurely pace to the Hotel de Ville, which was, as usual, surrounded by a purposeless rabble. There was no public sitting, but a private council was being held in one of the apartments of the building. Thither M. Damarest penetrated without difficulty, and took his place. There were some eight or ten persons already present. Two of them were in gorgeous military apparel—the rest were in civilian costume. One or two assumed the same fashion-

able splendour in which M. Damarest rejoiced, but most were simply enough attired. The new comer fresh from the enjoyment of his seventy-five franc breakfast wore an air of unusual happiness, that seemed for the moment almost to have quieted the scintillation of his bright black eyes; but those already occupying the chamber wore a look of by no means corresponding hilarity. As he entered a few looked up, and one nodded, but little general attention was devoted to him.

‘And it is quite certain,’ said a dark eager-looking man addressing one of the military persons, ‘that they have entered and make good their footing?’

‘Certain! I saw them myself, with my spy-glass, from the Arc de l’Etoile.’

‘With your spy-glass. You were at a good safe distance then?’

The other only shrugged his shoulders.

‘Can you not make it out a victory in some proclamation?’ continued the first speaker with a sneer.

‘I do not think I need teach lying to any member of this honourable assembly,’ retorted the General brutally.

A young man with a foreign accent interrupted the speakers. His was the only handsome face in the group. Dark curling locks long enough for a woman fell upon his shoulders. His hands



were white and effeminate, and there was a general air of delicacy in his features. The voice in which he spoke was soft, and the peculiarity of his accent lent a kind of coquettish piquancy to his utterance. 'General, if the Versaillists be actually within the enceinte the siege is at an end —n'est ce pas?'

'It is.'

'There is no possible chance of our defeating them?'

'None.'

'And we are hopelessly, irrevocably beaten?'

'Beyond doubt.'

'Then we know, I think, what remains to do. There are first,' he said, bringing his white hands together with an infantile grace, 'the hostages to be disposed of. They are not so numerous as in my opinion they ought to be, but they will suffice for a moderate battue. Then there is the city to be destroyed——'

'The public buildings you mean?' interrupted a member of the council at his side.

'Pardon, mon cher ami, I mean distinctly the capital,' he said in his most winning tones. 'I mean that this council shall be the new Erostratus. I mean that the world shall for the future tremble at the sacred name of the Commune, and that for its outward and visible sign it shall have only the blackened walls of a totally-effaced

capital. Do I make myself plain, mon bien-aimé ?'

A few were silent, but the majority roared assent. Amongst the latter was Damarest. The intelligence he heard on entering the room of the entry of the Versailles troops into the city had caused a sudden sinking of the heart which somewhat marred the agreeable process of digestion, but the proposition he had just heard appealed to the ferocious instincts of his nature, and hurried him away from the apprehensions which at first overwhelmed him.

'Lowtoski,' said M. Damarest raising his right arm, in a grandiose way, 'your idea bespeaks the grandeur of soul which belongs to the true votary of——'

'My excellent friend,' softly observed the young Pole, 'are you not aware that with the entry of the Versaillists there is an end of oratory ? I regret that the audience of the Hotel de Ville cannot still be enraptured with your eloquence, but unfortunately the time for it is past.'

It was curious to see how the fierce vain man succumbed to the cool, scarcely indicated contempt of the boyish creature who spoke.

'What quantity of powder have we in the arsenal ?' asked the first General who spoke.

'Powder !' exclaimed the young Pole raising his eye-brows with gentle wonder. 'Does my

friend want to go back to the days of bows and arrows, or of catapults? Powder! Why, it is a coarse and clumsy material, utterly unsuited to our task.'

'What do you mean—speak out?'

'Powder!' repeated the soft voice with a sort of feminine shudder. 'Surely, my gallant colleague, you do not make allowance for the march of science. You take your barrel of powder—your ten barrels of powder—your twenty, thirty barrels of powder—what you will. You dig under the wall of a house, put in your barrel, set fire to it, up goes the house, and perhaps the next to it, and there is the whole of your achievement. To carry on this work simultaneously all over Paris you would want some two hundred thousand men.

'Well then?'

'Well then, my courageous friend, have you not heard of the new forces—Dynamite, Nitro-Glycerine, and others of that class?'

'I have heard of these things, but do not know much about them.'

'Ah,' with a soft, caressing smile, 'you will hear of them, and I hope witness some of their effects, which are the perfect triumph of modern science. We put aside your slow-coaching powder, fit to make fire-works for boys, and proceed on the scientific plan.'

'Curse your science,' growled the General, 'come to the point.'

‘Do not allow yourself to be emporté,’ dear General, ‘your clear, good sense will, I am sure, thoroughly approve my plan when you have heard it.’

‘Speak it out then.’

‘There is no necessity for haste in describing it,’ said the gentle voice with mild deprecation, ‘though once adopted it must be carried out with vigour. First there is petroleum, with which,’ he said, with a winning smile, ‘to decorate the public buildings and the mansions of the wealthy, so that they may send a graceful, artistic blaze up in that direction in which the pious turn their eyes.’

‘We understand all about the petroleum,’ struck in the General. ‘Do we not?’

‘Yes, all, all,’ was the answer of several voices.

‘Do not dwell on that, then,’ observed the General surlily. He was jealous of the capacity for mischief evinced by his fragile-looking colleague.

‘Patience, dear friends. The rest does not need much to explain. You know that the city is permeated in all directions by sewers?’

‘Yes, yes.’

‘Very well. There are your mines ready made. Pack these with the powerful explosives—put the nitro-glycerine into the cellars—into every subterranean spot. A spark from the burning buildings—the fall of a brick—the rumble of a cart—

and away then goes Paris into flame, into debris, into smoke, and dust, and ashes, into perpetual shudder over the name of the Commune which has destroyed her in the interests of humanity.'

A unanimous shout of 'bravo' arose.

'And the hostages?'

'To-morrow will do for them. They ought not to die until we can celebrate their sacrifice with a noble funeral pyre.'

Again there was a burst of approbation so unanimous that it almost became a roar.

'My colleagues of the glorious Commune,' struck in eagerly the sharp voice of M. Damarest, while now the blazing eyes shone out in their full lustre, 'leave to me the honour of disposing of the hostages. My one passion is the holy musket, the sacred friend of humanity; and in the name of that true regenerator of the world, I ask to be allowed to use it in wiping out some traces of the base superstition under which we have lived.'

'It would be a pity,' said the soft voice, 'to deny to the amiable and well-beloved Damarest the performance of the sublime task to which his noble and generous ambition aspires.'

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE WORK OF HUMANITY.

**T**IMES had changed with M. Damarest in more respects than in the substitution of rich meals for scanty crusts, and fine clothing for shabby covering. He inhabited a luxurious lodging with floors carpeted in the English fashion, and furniture of a costly if not of a very tasteful description. His bed-room was indeed a very choice apartment, and might have suited a person with a more refined taste than himself. But there was one feature of the old abode unaltered. In a corner visible from the bed there still stood the rough, brass-bound weapon which had formed the chief decoration of the garret in the Rue Passy. The affection of its owner was probably at first something of a whim. He had enabled himself to purchase it by denying necessities to his wife, after having suffered his child to die of privation if not of absolute starvation, and he said to himself that it should be dearer to him than wife or child. He declaimed upon this gem to his club

colleagues and fellow Communists, styling it the Regenerator of Humanity, the Friend of Man, the Executioner of Tyrants—until at last he succeeded in working himself into a sort of idolatry towards the mischievous implement. His feeling was not exactly lunacy, but a deliberate aberration of sense such as men produce by drinking. He would not look at the thing with sober eyes; he fancied his craze was something that showed his innate superiority to the masses. It was in accordance with this fantastic cultus he had the weapon so placed that he should see it the first thing as he opened his eyes in the morning and the last as he extinguished his light at night.

On the 24th of May he did not rise early. His habits as well as his circumstances had altered a good deal from what they had been a short time before, and a protracted sitting at night seduced him to laziness the next day. It was a tolerably advanced hour therefore when he turned his eyes to the corner where his musket reposed, but though he was not in a very excitable mood he would not refrain from one of the rhapsodies in which he loved to indulge. Then he rose and dressed, this time with considerable care, though with the awkwardness of a man to whom fine clothes are somewhat of an unaccustomed luxury. He breakfasted chez lui, not at the expensive rate

at which he made his meal the previous day, but still in a manner calculated to gratify the appetite of a patriot. His meal slowly and carefully accomplished, he prepared to issue forth, the finish being put to his toilet by drawing on, with considerable difficulty, a new pair of straw-coloured gloves—they were part of the results of a requisition levied on a shop in the Rue de Rivoli, next door to that which he used to supply with bottines. This done, he seized his musket with a theatrical gesture, the grasp, however, having the unfortunate effect of bursting the delicate fabric on his hands. An oath left his lips. Then in his stagey manner he exclaimed, 'My idol is resolved that I shall be no kid glove patriot; she demands a firm hand to procure her sacrifice.' In this frame of mind he issued forth.

'Ha,' he said, 'the brave work goes on.'

His sentence of approval was called forth by seeing the flames bursting out from the windows of the Ministry of Finance. They licked the walls and seemed to try the joinings of the stones, and roared as if in glee at the destruction they were committing. Some honest people had made an effort to quench the flames, and one batch actually in their simplicity had brought a fire engine. With a shout of triumph it was seized by a batch of Federals, who were acting under the command of a red-haired man that had sat at



the council board of the Hotel de Ville the previous day.

‘You are not going to put out the fire you have yourself set going?’ said Damarest in a tone of remonstrance.

‘Ha, ha!’ laughed the red-haired man, ‘you do not know Etienne Marbot. Wait and see.’

Amid roars of laughter, a cask was brought forward, and its contents poured into the receiver of the engine. The handles were worked, and a stream of liquid directed against the burning building. Immediately the flames leaped up with a new fury and spread with a wild rapidity. It was petroleum which had been poured into the engine.

‘Am I a weak fool, Damarest?’ asked the red-haired man.

‘You are a noble soul!’ was the solemn reply of M. Damarest. ‘I have a grand—a sublime idea. There is but one house between this palace of infamous law and the Maison Dentu. Employ your god-like power over the flames to make them envelope all three.’

‘It shall be done, my patriotic brother. But why the Maison Dentu?’

‘Why?’ repeated M. Damarest solemnly. ‘That man Dentu employed me to make bottines. I laboured when he received the profit. When I preferred the interest of France and of humanity

to his degrading work he used to reproach me with idleness. The wife whom I turned from my door in obedience to the grand new gospel of humanity, that low-souled bourgeois fed. Let his house burn.'

'It shall burn, mon frère,' said Etienne Marbot, and with the gesture of a hero doing a great act for the benefit of his race he directed the hose upon the house of the unfortunate maker of bottines. So rapid was the seizure by the flames that it seemed as if the engine poured forth fire from its mouth. The spectators who disapproved the act for the most part fled. They made no further attempt to interfere with the progress of destruction. A crowd remained, but they, alas, were yelling with delight over the mad exhibition they beheld.

M. Damarest waited in stern patience, musket in hand, until the fire had completely gained possession of the house he hated, and then turning to his colleague with an air of dignity he said, 'Brother, in my person the Commune and Humanity thank you for the heroic act you have just accomplished.'

'Damarest, my brother, my sacrifices in the great cause are repaid by the approbation of a noble soul like yours.'

'Marbot, I hear the musketry of our brothers at the barricades. I go to join them until even-

ing, when my great work is to be done. I leave you to the performance of your noble task.'

'Embrace me, brother.'

'Volontiers!'

'Adieu, grand homme!'

'Adieu, grande âme!'

Leaving his high-hearted friend to pursue his mission, M. Damarest pursued his way westwards. The sounds of musketry were in his ear, and he listened to them with an excitement which was terrible. Guided by the noises he turned from the end of the Rue de Rivoli more to the eastward, where, in the narrow streets, a fierce combat was going on between the Versailles troops who sought to reach Montmartre, and the Federals who fought behind the barricades. 'Now,' he said to himself, as the thick and frequent reports came to his ear, 'now is the time to show that the soul has conquered the body—that this weak timidity has disappeared, and that I can add thy music, my beautiful'—clasping closer his musket—to the harmony awakened by my brethren.'

The barricades were monstrous structures composed of all materials that came to hand—waggon, omnibuses, house furniture, bags of sand, corn sacks—the interstices being roughly filled up with the torn-up street pavement. Just before Damarest appeared upon the scene there

had been an attempt on the part of the Versailles troops to carry the barricade at the point of the bayonet, and it had been repulsed. The Federals were in tremendous exultation at their success, and the enthusiasm communicated itself to the impulsive nature of M. Damarest. Fire was now resumed by the troops, and the hail of the mitrailleuse mingled with the rattle of musketry against the barricade. 'Hurrah,' cried the captain of the barricade. 'Up, men, and pour your fire into the ranks of these defeated cowards.' With a wild cry the defenders mounted and gave a courageous if not steadily maintained answer to the fire of the troops. With a fierce throbbing at his heart, and a strange ringing in his ears, Damarest loaded his beloved, and mounted the barricade with the rest. There had been a momentary pause on the part of the assailants. Damarest, this time without shutting his eyes, fired right into the smoke before him. The recoil was considerable, but he bore it better than he had previously done. His heart was swelled with pride at the achievement of having actually delivered a shot at the enemy, and it was with feelings of no small self-congratulation he proceeded to re-load his piece. He had dropped in the cartridge and rammed it home, and was proceeding to place a cap upon the nipple, when all of a sudden a shell struck the top of the barricade,

its deadly fragments sprawling in all directions, while volley after volley of musketry rang through the long narrow street. For a moment the heart of Damarest, lately so high with exultation, seemed to cease to beat; then with a sudden bound he sprang down the barrier, and, clinging to the side of the wall, or cowering behind a projection where it offered, he made his way to a house which he knew would give him egress from the street. From the upper windows of this house a fire was kept upon the troops, and they had marked it and made it an object of special attack. It was a moment of dreadful agony for Damarest as he had to cross the street to reach this shelter. Even as he entered the door the post was struck by a bullet, and it was with livid cheek and colourless lips he staggered in.

‘Hurt, citizen?’ asked a man in a blouse with a smoking rifle in his hand.

‘Badly,’ stammered Damarest pressing his hand on his stomach as if to staunch an inward wound.

‘It does not bleed much,’ sneered the man, as he ascended the stairs to resume his place in the fray.

Damarest without answer stole out through the rear and away from the scene of combat. Rage filled his soul. ‘Oh, my accursed nerves,’ he said. Then he added with ferocity, ‘But I am

not to be crushed. I shall do deeds still, and thou, my princess, hast not yet seen thy last act of service to the cause of freedom and humanity.'

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE HOSTAGES OF THE COMMUNE.

THE shades of evening fall quickly in a prison, and it was no wonder that the grave elderly man who sat in cell No. 21 of the 4th division of La Roquette should at half-past seven of a May afternoon be compelled to put aside his breviary. The fading light rendered it impossible for him to pursue his task further. It was not difficult to see that he was an ecclesiastic, and by his attire one of dignity. The colour and shape of his robe proclaimed the bishop, and the knowledge of recent events in Paris made it easy to guess that here was the illustrious hostage whose life the Commune thought it fair to truck against that of one of its own rascals. The Archbishop sat thoughtful in the gathering twilight. His fine features were overcast with a sad expression, and his usually erect figure was somewhat bowed as if by the weight and gravity of the thoughts that came over him. Through the grating over his cell door there floated an almost imperceptible

smoke, which, however, did not fail to catch his watchful sense. 'Ah,' he murmured, 'it is as I feared. That is smoke, and it is not of the prison nor from an accident. The terrible disposition shown by the crowd as we came hither bodes ill.'

In the corridor heavy steps were heard, the key grated in the lock, and the door was flung open. Beside the ordinary warder stood a man in civilian clothes, but armed. Even in the gathering gloom the sparkle of his dark, fierce, nervous eyes might be remarked. Behind him were several Federals in the uniform of the National Guard, and fully armed likewise.

Taking a book from his pocket and affecting to look up a list of names, the leader called in an insolent tone.

'Darboy.'

'Present,' said the Archbishop mildly, as he rose from his seat.

'I am Damarest, Delegate of general safety.'

The Archbishop bowed slightly.

'Have you heard of me?' he asked.

'No,' was the reply.

Something that seemed like the shadow of wounded vanity passed over the face of the Communist. He turned his back rudely upon the prisoner, with the single word 'follow!' and passed along the corridor. The Archbishop took



up the breviary he had laid aside and placed it under his robe. Then putting the biretta upon his head he said to the warder and soldiers near him, 'I am ready.'

A party of them conducted him down the steps into the broad walk which encircles the 'ronde.' As they got into the open air the Archbishop looked up, with that involuntary pleasure in seeing the sky which even the briefest detention in prison ensures. But its aspect was not reassuring. Heavy clouds that were not the daughters of the sun floated across the expanse; lurid flashes lit up their edges here and there. Small black particles fell in more or less dense showers.

'What conflagration is that?' he asked of one of his guards.

'Smoking out aristocrats and priests,' brutally replied the man.

'Has the city been set on fire?' mildly continued the interrogatory of the Archbishop.

'Only part of it to-day—the rest to-morrow; and to-night we cut the throats of the enemies of the people.' As he spoke he looked into the face of the Archbishop with a stare in which insolence and ferocity were equally blended.

'And what good do you hope to do yourselves or your cause by that?' returned the prisoner calmly.

'Good!' he roared. 'We want no good. We

are sick of that cant about good. We are done with good for ever. We want evil—evil—evil,’ he shrieked on an ascending key, ‘give me evil! give me Satan if you will.’

The conversation was interrupted by new arrivals, each under a separate party. The first was a tall figure in the soutane of a priest. He was far advanced in life, but his handsome face preserved all the animation, and much of the freshness, of youth. As he marched in the rank of his guards his erect figure, taller by nearly a head than most of those around him, scarcely distinguished him more from them than the nobleness of his air. As he approached the Archbishop he bent his knee with more than ordinary solemnity, and it was in an impressive tone the prelate, as he raised him, said, ‘Welcome, Abbé Deguerry—we meet, it seems to me, for the last time.’

‘A bas les prêtres!’ was shouted from the outside of the circle which had been enlarged by the new accession of Federals.

‘Silence!’ said a sergeant gruffly. ‘They are to be shot not scolded.’ The sergeant was an ill-looking fellow enough, but there seemed an air of manliness about him which compared favourably with that of his companions.

Further attention was diverted by new arrivals. The Abbé Allard came. He had during the war, as a member of the International Society,

devoted himself to the succour of the sick and wounded, and had won high consideration by his zeal. There was not the slightest trace of emotion on his pale face as he bent before the Archbishop.

‘I presume you guess our destination as I do, Abbé.’

‘No doubt, Monseigneur. I have been waiting for it. But can it be possible they will have the fury to assail your Eminence?’

‘Do you doubt it? Do you forget my office? It is part of my inheritance.’

Yet another priest was added to the ranks of the doomed in the person of Père Ducoudray, Superior of the Ste Geneviève school. He was gravely and kindly received by the Prelate, whose bearing, though gentle, was as composed and dignified as if he was holding a reception in the Salon of the Archevêché. As a fifth arrived the Archbishop said to them, with a slight smile, ‘Ah, Père Clerc, you at least cannot be surprised at being brought into the company of death—you terrible Jesuits have done such evil things to these people!’

‘Monseigneur, they make death less formidable by making our lives one long calumny.’

‘Excellent Père Clerc, a life of sorrow endured for His sake is a good preparation for the final hour.’

The delegate came forward and cried 'Range the prisoners.'

The ecclesiastics were placed side by side against the wall, and Damarest scowled at them with an indescribable hate and fury. He called over the roll carefully, giving to each only his surname. They answered. In the voices of these doomed men there was not a tremor perceptible.

'Five!' he exclaimed in a high key, as he completed the roll, 'and there were six of ours! Man for man—not a hostage shall be spared.' Then looking over his list he cried, 'Summon Bonjean.'

In a few minutes steps were heard, and in the midst of a guard was seen President Bonjean, the chief of the Court of Cassation. He had been a senator; he was a judge. Under a belief that duty compelled good citizens to face the terrors of the insurrection, he had remained and was discharging the duties of his court, when he was dragged away as a hostage. He advanced now towards his brethren in misfortune with a firm step. The Archbishop received him tenderly, but their greeting was interrupted by the wiry, penetrating voice of Damarest.

'Priests, aristocrats, tyrants!' he cried, 'six of our brethren have been slain in cold blood by your co-conspirators outside the walls. You six must die too.'

‘I do not mean,’ said the Archbishop, ‘to remonstrate against this murder. I know it would be in vain. But be good enough to defer your purpose for a few minutes.’

‘For what?’

‘We priests wish to confess one another, and our lay——’

‘Ha, ha,’ shrieked Damarest with a wild laugh. ‘Ha, I thought so. That was why I asked. Even to the last you want to practise the superstition with which you blind the eyes of the credulous of this world. Not a minute. Federals! attention. Fall into rank.’

As the Guards fell into a rude line the Prelate raised his voice. ‘My brethren,’ said he, ‘I give you the absolution *in globo*.’

‘Are you ready?’ yelled Damarest to those under his command.

The voice of the Archbishop was again heard. ‘Misguided people, children led astray by evil counsellors, you have the pardon of a sinner, and may God forgive you as I do!’

Suddenly two men rushed from the rank and flung themselves at the feet of the Prelate. One was the sergeant we have already noticed.

‘Your blessing, your blessing, good bishop,’ they cried.

The Archbishop raised his arm with solemn dignity, and uttered a few words in accordance with their petition.

But the harsh and piercing accents of Damarest were heard exclaiming, 'Drag them back, drag them back.' A dozen hands were outstretched, and the two men were pulled into rank, Damarest wildly calling, 'You are here to shoot these tyrants, not to grovel before them. At last, at last,' he continued, 'the hour of my joy is come. My shot shall be the signal for you to fire.'

He raised his musket to his shoulder and discharged it point blank into the rank of the hostages set against the wall. Then followed a double volley, and the six victims fell.

'Hurrah!' shrilly cried Damarest, 'Vive la Commune!'

'Stay, they are not all dead,' said the officer of the Federals.

As he spoke, one face lifted itself up from those which lay prostrated on the ground. It was that of M. Bonjean, a man of powerful physique. The expression of the stony aspect he turned upon his murderers was so appalling that several of them shrank back behind their comrades. The officer, however, who had called attention, coolly drew a revolver, and applying it to the face which had so moved his soldiers, completed the work of slaughter.

'Is it well done, mon frère?' he asked of Damarest.

'Well done?' was shrieked in reply, 'well

*done?* It is a deed to shine for ever in the annals of the human race! But all is not over.'

'What beside?'

'There is death, good. After death comes burial.'

'Right. Have you coffins?'

'Coffins! for these beasts? What coffins did our brothers get? Are we to honour these wretches dead whom we despised when alive?'

'Brother, you honour our cause. A cart there. Heave this carrion in.'

A rude cart was brought. Some even of the Federals were shocked at the manner in which the corpses were flung in, but the officer looked on as calmly as if they were pieces of coarse furniture, while Damarest rushed about in an intoxication of excitement and delight. He followed the cart as it was driven away to Père la Chaise; he stood over the diggers as they scraped away a few feet of earth with which to cover the remains, in order, as the officer said, that the 'corrupting bodies may not poison the citizens as their corrupting minds had done.'

When the work was finally accomplished Damarest solemnly loaded his musket, and fired a shot.

'What is that for?' asked the officer curiously.

'It is the voice of my beloved rejoicing in the

sacrifice she has this day offered to the genius of humanity.'

'Are you done?'

'For to-day, yes. To-morrow I can consecrate myself to fire.'



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## JUST IN TIME.

THE Hotel Villecourt was a lofty building occupying several storeys, most of which had been long since disused. There was no parapet to the roof, but the dormer windows were large, fully the height of a man, and they were numerous, and ran at both sides. At one of these stood Annette Beaune looking down upon Paris in a frame of mind in which dread and horror struggled for mastery. For an artistic fancy there might have been found room for something of an involuntary admiration at the grandeur of the spectacle that offered itself, but the simple heart of the peasant girl could only remember the crime and the peril to herself and those she loved. We now know that Paris was not all burnt, and that in effect but a comparatively small portion of it was destroyed; but those who looked out upon the fire from its very midst, as it seemed to them, might well be excused if they believed they saw in process the utter destruction of the city, and felt convinced that they were about to be swallowed up in the

tremendous catastrophe. Annette was a stranger in Paris, and not familiar with the appearance or locality of the different public buildings or leading thoroughfares. She did not know it was the Tuileries, the Palace of the Legion of Honour, the Ministry of Finance, the Hotel de Ville, the Prefecture of Police, the shops of the Rue de Rivoli, Rue Royale, Rue de Bac, Rue de Lille, or the houses of the Croix-Rouge that were burning, but through the brown smoke laden with the pungent odour of petroleum, which spread itself over the sky, and seemed to fill the atmosphere, whithersoever she turned, the mad, leaping flames met her gaze. Pinnacles and towers and prominent points of all kinds seemed just to rear their heads above an abyss which was momentarily about to devour them. As if the conflagration were not of itself sufficient to horrify the soul, there were mingled the sounds that told only too well of deadly conflict. Across the smoke-dimmed prospect would now and then flash a shell with its horrid and significant sound. From low down could be heard the voices of the cannon, the mitrailleuse, and the chasseur, mingled in a hideous concert, while through them came up now and then the cheers, the shouts, and sometimes, alas! the cries of men.

Pale and terror-stricken, Annette descended from the window from whence she witnessed the awful tragedy. Had she wished to see more the openings at the other side of the roof would have

revealed a further extension of the spectacle. But she felt sick and faint ; her strong young limbs trembled ; the courage which she had acquired through the familiarity with danger for the moment totally deserted her, and she could only hide her face in her hands and sob piteously. This paroxysm did not, however, last long. Her fine nature gradually re-asserted itself, and she was able calmly to think of the duties that lay before her. It was with a tolerably firm step that in a few minutes after she entered the chamber where the Marquise lay. The poor lady was an object of such compassion to Annette that the sight of her soon banished all feeling of affright.

The high-born dame was in truth an object worthy of compassion. During the past few days her bodily strength, feeble as it had been, grew visibly less, but as it decayed her mind seemed to have grown healthier. She had ceased to wander and had lost her excitability ; when she did speak, which was not often, it was in a voice growing manifestly feebler, but quite collectedly.

As Annette entered the room, and hastened over to her anxiously, she turned her eyes without moving her head, and said in accents which the girl could but faintly hear, 'It is not true about my husband ; he has returned.'

The doctors had enjoined strict reticence with regard to the condition of the Marquis, and An-

nette felt in a difficulty. The invalid saw her confusion with faculties preternaturally sharpened.

‘From what has been said within my hearing within the last few days, I know the siege is long over. He would not have remained away. Tell me where he is? Tell me—is he—is he dead?’ she asked with rising voice.

‘No, no, Madame la Marquise,’ answered Annette hastily.

‘The truth—the full truth,’ said the Marquise with impatience.

Annette saw that any attempt at further concealment would only accomplish the mischief it was intended to avoid, and she found herself compelled to detail to her feverish patient the whole of the circumstances connected with the Marquis’s wound and condition. The Marquise listened to her recital with a patience that astonished Annette. When it concluded the girl observed tears stand in the large dim eyes, and the pallid lips were moving as if in earnest prayer. For a while she lay thus, and Annette marvelled to find that all the horrors which were filling the outside, the flames whose reflection could be seen through the drawn curtains, the volume of smoke which actually penetrated the apartment, the noises that swelled upon the ear, did not in the least degree excite the attention of the feeble, sensitively-organized woman.

In a little while she turned to Annette with a new light in her eyes. 'Help me to dress,' she said; 'I must see my husband.'

'Oh, madame, you are too weak. Wait until you get a little more strength. Beside M. le Marquis——'

But the Marquise cut her short. 'Child,' she said, 'you know I will not get stronger, and I must see my husband before I die.'

Annette's good sense forbade the use of remonstrances which she saw would only excite the poor sufferer, without altering her determination, and, though reluctantly, prepared to obey the wishes of the Marquise. She thought for a moment of leaving the chamber to seek help, but she knew that the household were scattered, some in the attics she had left, fascinated by curiosity, others hiding in the cellars in the hope of escaping the impending destruction, and a few out of doors, led either by a desire to learn more accurately or perhaps sharing in the criminal intoxication which had taken possession of so many of the lower classes. To her, indeed, the task was not a heavy one, though the feebleness of the patient made it peculiarly anxious. With many and sore misgivings Annette found it at last accomplished. When, however, the Marquise attempted to rise from the arm-chair in which she had been seated during the concluding operations of her simple

toilet, she would have sunk but for the quickness of Annette's encircling arm.

'Oh,' moaned the sorrowful woman, in a voice trembling with an emotion that shook her weak frame, 'is it possible that after all I cannot go?'

'You shall go,' said Annette raising her tenderly in her arms. She was hardly the weight of a grown child. 'Lean your head on my shoulder. Now.'

And the girl bore her from her own chamber to that of her husband. On reaching the door Annette knocked lightly, but no answer was returned.

This did not surprise her, for she knew that the attendants were all scattered, and of course the Marquis could not answer himself. She advanced, therefore, confidently into the silent room, and deposited her light burden in a chair by the bedside. The figure of the Marquis was stretched upon the bed in its usual attitude, and Annette had cast but a passing glance at it, having to give all her attention to the patient she carried, the slight exertion of the feeble woman having reduced her to an alarming state of prostration. At last she revived, and Annette raising her form from the chair, she looked at her husband. As she did so Annette became transfixed with a horror to which all she had endured during the day seemed nothing. A loud shriek rang from the

lips of the Marquise. 'This is not paralysis,' she exclaimed; 'this is death—oh, oh,' and she sank on her knees. Annette, almost as much overcome, knelt beside her, and putting an arm round her waist sought to raise the stricken woman. For a moment the feeble head was erect, while the lips murmured in low accents, 'Merciful God, Thou hast heard my prayer. I go to meet my children and my husband.' Then the poor head sank again on the bed. Some indistinct words still came from her, but in a little time they were still. Annette lifted her gently into the arm-chair, but found she was dead. She had indeed gone to rejoin the loved ones.

In the accumulation of excitement around her new sounds or new fears had little effect upon the girl, but yet while sunk in a momentary stupor by the side of the dead Marquise, her attention was forcibly demanded by a sharp crash in her immediate neighbourhood. She ran to the window, and beheld to her dismay a number of armed men, some in the uniform of the National Guard, others in blouses or shabby civilian garments, in the court-yard. Some had torches: one was already on a ladder with a painter's bucket and brush, daubing the walls. Her instinct told her at once it was petroleum, of which she had vaguely heard. She ran hastily to the head of the great staircase. There the crash was quickly explained. It was the entrance door. Nine armed

men stood there. One, who seemed a leader, was in garments of elegant make, but soiled and begrimed. In his hand he held a brass-bound musket, to which a bayonet was attached. He stood while he ordered a party to search the adjoining apartments and 'fusiller' any one who did not come out. The bewildered domestics came clattering down the upper stairs, and trooped to the landing where Annette stood. The man looked up, and observed them. As he turned his face upward, Annette could see the gleam of his wild black eyes.

'Let not one stir from the spot you stand on,' he called to the group on the landing. 'Whoever does so will be tossed into the flames.'

As if rendered powerless by the command the whole group remained motionless. They saw him deliberately take a cartridge from his pocket, drop it into the barrel of the gun, put on a percussion cap, and raise it to his shoulder.

Then with a wild outcry all turned and fled. At the moment they did so the detonation of the musket rang with echoes of thunder through the building, and a woman, who had been standing at Annette's side, fell bleeding on the floor. Annette fled with the rest. She heard hurrying steps up the stairs, and her heart beat with new terror. Through long passages and up through flights of stairs she ran. At first she thought to lock herself into some room, but an ominous light showed



her that already fire was beginning to do its work upon the house, and that she might only escape death in one form to encounter it in a shape more terrible. The size and complexity of the house, though she had become tolerably accustomed to it, bewildered her. As she stood at one end of a corridor, panting and breathless, she heard a voice high and sharp repeating, 'I have sworn the destruction of this house, and behold I keep my word!' In a moment she saw at the other end of the passage two men, in one of whom she saw the person she recognized the leader. With a yell this man pointed the girl out to his companion. 'There is another,' he cried, brandishing aloft his bayonet from which the blood dripped. The place in which Annette stood was a cul de sac. There was no egress for her except running directly to encounter her pursuers, when an intervening staircase offered a chance of escape. The idea flashed with electric rapidity across her mind, but she had not courage enough to put it into execution. The men came towards her, but there was a momentary delay. The leader stopped his companion, and said, 'After all, wait, I would prefer to fire. My bayonet has done work—see'—and he looked at the gory weapon, 'but I love the ring of my musket—my beloved.'

'Good,' said the other.

'Are you loaded?' said the leader.

‘A moment—now.’

‘Let us come closer to the girl and shoot her simultaneously.’

Almost paralyzed with fear Annette listened and saw. Feeling that her last hour was come she put up an agonized prayer to Heaven. She gave little heed to some hurrying footsteps that came up the stair whither she had thought of seeking flight, as she did not think it mattered much whether there were more or less of her executioners. But as two men panting with haste emerged from the stairs upon the corridor she saw her intended assassins turn with affright. She looked, and the soldiers’ uniform sent a thrill of pleasure to her heart. There was a struggle which passed before her eyes, as it seemed, like a flash of lightning. Two musket shots resounded in the passage, but the men who fired them lay prone upon the floor writhing in deadly bayonet wounds.

‘Annette, do you not know me?’ cried the voice of one of the soldiers.

The face of the speaker was so blackened that one would have supposed recognition perfectly impossible, but Annette, without a second’s hesitation, ran to the form dripping, alas, with blood, begrimed with smoke, and dust, and powder, and with her arms round his neck and her face upon his shoulder, weeping and sobbing, exclaimed, ‘Thank God! thank God!’

‘As sure as his face is ugly, and his bad work is done, that,’ said the other soldier, pointing to the corpse which lay at his feet, ‘that’s the ruffian that delivered a lecture—as if I was a peep-show—on me and my crutch.’

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CONCLUSION.

THE fires of Paris were all extinguished, the National Assembly had come to Versailles, and bright May had warmed into sultry July, when Sergeant Michael Mahony sat in a café not very far from the Palace studying a letter. His brow was contracted with intellectual effort, and the impatience of his mood was expressed by sundry ejaculations. While he was thus absorbed a man in the worn-out garb of a soldier, and with cheeks paled by ill-health, entered slowly, and sat at one of the round tables near. While sinking into a seat he emitted that sort of sigh which appears to be characteristic of weakness. It attracted Mike's attention from his letter, and he looked up for a moment ; then he resumed its perusal. The stranger, however, turning his glance upon the reader, was not so readily satisfied. His face wore a puzzled look. It seemed as if he ought to recognize an old acquaintance, but the frowning brow, the compression of the lip, the general ferocity of aspect produced by the tough struggle

with the difficulties of the epistle, were such unaccustomed traits that he was plunged into a state of complete uncertainty.

‘Mug-rat,’ said the reader, half aloud. ‘What the divvle can be the manin of mug-rat? Oh, I have it, by japers—its immigrate, sure enough. What a thundering donkey I am. Wasn’t it a sin that Jimmy the Inkbottles didn’t wallop more education into me?’—

‘Why, it is he,’ said a feeble voice from the other table.

‘It is who?’ asked Mike, looking up from his studies.

‘L’Irlandais.’

‘And who the deuce else would it be? And may I ask who are—but, good God! is it possible?’—

A wan smile passed over the face of the stranger as Mike stared hard at him.

‘In the name of Heaven are you Sergeant Beaunez?’

‘I don’t wonder you doubt it, but I am!’

‘Hurray, old comrade! A bottle of wine, garçon. But you’re quite sure you’re not dead?’

‘Well, hardly. I fancy that my corpse would look rather more like my real self than I do at this moment.’

‘But sure I thought it was your corpse or something very like it we left after us at that farmhouse near Reichshoffen.’

'It was something like it, but not exactly. The Prussians, bad as I was, carried me off as a prisoner. It was a frightful life. I spent three months dying. They had me lifted off my bed three times to be heaved into the dead waggon, when I baffled them by opening my eyes.'

'I suppose 'twas through fair hatred of them Germans you recovered?'

'Something like it, I dare say. I'm not certain whether I shall ever be any good again. My release from the German prison only brought me into a French hospital, but I have at last been able to leave that. Within the past few days I have found my legs again—that is,' said he, looking down with a sigh at the wasted members—'if these can be called mine.'

'Psha! You'll be all right. Taste a glass of that. Sure I was hopping on a crutch little better than a month ago.'

'But what of our old comrade, Michel Voss? Is he alive?'

'Alive! Alive, is it? You may say alive. There isn't a more alive man between this and Paris. Alive! it's he that is.'

'Why, what is the matter with him?'

'Well, he's married, that's all.'

'It isn't much.'

'May be not and may be it is. But as he is married at all he has the luck to have the handsomest and the best wife in France.'

‘Let me see. Is it the pretty girl I saw in tears in his father’s house when he went away with us?’

‘I wasn’t there, you know, but I’m sure you’ve hit the mark as fairly as ever Michel’s bullet did.’

‘And where are they?’

‘Here in this blessed city of Versailles, and when you’ve tossed that jorum off we’ll go to see them.’

‘Agreed,’ said Sergeant Beaunez, who seemed to brighten under the influence of the wine and the conversation.

‘You must wait a bit, though,’ observed Mike, ‘until I have got through this,’ indicating the letter which had occupied so much of his attention, and he re-applied himself to the mastery of its contents. As circumstances have since occurred which remove all need of bashfulness from the fair writer, we need not apologize for a glance over his shoulder, and the following revelation of its contents :—

‘Cappa, Jully one.

‘Deer Mik,

‘This cums hoppin Yur well as it lave us glory be tu God. Wee resave ur letrs & wee wor fritnd out of our livs. Ur pore muthr skritchd her lif out amost, & i crid tell i tawt my hart wud brek. i hop ur cruch is dun fur evvr, & that ur left leg is oll rite. Kennit is gon to furrn parts

they se. Mee unkl Jon sent 3 passig tikts tu Amerky & wee r gon to mmgrat. If u lik tu b dun solderng i nose won persn that wud be hart glad tu se u in Amerky, an not let u go solderng anny mor. Rite soon fur wee wil be awf frum Queenstown on the 4 awgust. Wud u lik tu cum. Yur fathr and muthr r cuming. The gev up the farm tu the ajint. With fond luv till deth

‘ur’s respexfully,

‘Lizzy Connell.’

It is not difficult to understand from the nature of this epistle that it occupied the mind of Mike Mahony very seriously, but once he had quite possessed himself of its contents he rose immediately to present the faded sergeant to his old friend.

Michel and his wife occupied humble but decent lodgings in the town pending their final arrangements, and on the morning in question they were expecting the visit from Mike. He had taken his discharge before his marriage, and they were now contemplating their future.

Annette’s fair head rested on the broad shoulder of her husband, and her soft brown eyes looked lovingly into his, in which there was a trace of sadness.

‘And we shall then not return to the dear village in the Vosges?’

‘Impossible, love. I could not live there. My



heart would burst at the idea of becoming a Prussian and ceasing to be a Frenchman. Dear petite, you would not have me do so ?' and there was a trace of anxiety in his voice.

'No, Michel.'

'You are quite sure ?'

There seemed to be a slight conflict in the girl's mind, but in a moment she raised her head and said :

'You remember when you first spoke of being a soldier ?'

'Ay, well, love.'

'You stipulated that when France was in danger I should consent to lose you.'

'Oh ! how well I do remember. It seems years since, and yet it is so short a time.'

'I agreed. The hour came. I did not murmur. I cannot think of separating for ever from the dear place where I lived from childhood, and where—where,' said she with a bright blush, 'you and I spent so many happy—' here a sudden catching of the breath took place as if something had seized the girl's waist rather tightly— 'without a pang, but I would not, if I could, induce my husband to separate himself from his country.'

'My true-hearted, my noble girl.'

The endearments which undoubtedly would have followed were abruptly cut short by the entrance of Mike and Sergeant Beaunez. Michel's

astonishment at what he considered a resurrection was equal to that of his comrade, while Annette, who had been fully informed of the nature of most of their adventures, showed her mingled surprise and pleasure. Lengthy explanations were given on all sides, and when the friends sat to a little dinner, which Annette had prepared, there was quite a glow of happy recollection over the whole party. When the meal was concluded, Michel remarked with some surprise that his usually light-hearted friend had grown thoughtful.

‘What is the matter, old comrade?’ he said to Mike, ‘you look out of spirits.’

‘No, not exactly,’ said Mike slowly, ‘not exactly. But I’m coming to a conclusion that’s very serious.’

‘What is that?’

‘Well, it’s no less a thing than to leave the army.’

‘Is that all—why, I have done so, and you know the war is at an end for many a day.’

‘You’re right, but you see there’s a difference.’

‘A difference?’

‘Well, you know, Michel, I’m not a fellow to make a boast, but you see there’s the Marshal is commander-in-chief now, and one of the family, you know——’

‘Oh, I see. But why then do you leave?’

‘I can guess; I will tell you, Monsieur Mike,’ interrupted Annette gaily.

‘Try, Mrs Voss—I mean Annette,’ said Mike, with an answering smile.

‘It is on account of Lizzy Connell, is it not?’

‘Oh, trust a woman to find out a tender secret. Well, it is just that.’

‘And are you not quite happy, you dreadful man?’

‘Happy, I’m as happy as the days are long, and they’re very long now with this awful hot weather. I’m mad to be off to my dear ‘darling, only I am a little disappointed. I’d like at all events to have one more discourse, if nothing else, with the head of the family. Now, I take my discharge next week, and the week after I’m off to America—an exile, you see, from my own country, too.’

‘So am I,’ said Michel, ‘for I will not return to the land of the Vosges and the Rhine until it is French once more.’

‘And you expect it will be?’

‘I cherish the hope.’

‘Well, Michel, when the day comes that is likely to bring that about, drop me a line to America and I’ll be happy to come and take my place by your side once again.’

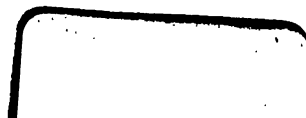
‘And,’ cried the Sergeant, erecting his bent form, ‘I feel as if I could calculate on new

strength to lend a hand in the achievement of the glorious task.'

'And I,' said the soft voice of Annette, 'would send my husband forth without a murmur to do his duty for France.'

THE END.













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